THE OPEN AIR

by

ADRIAN BELL

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by

Adrian Bell

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THE OPEN AIR

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An Anthology
of English Country Life
by
ADRIAN BELL

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★ *Introduction* ★

I was sitting in a public-house in a market town, thinking about this anthology. It was the lunch hour, and the air was noisy and smoky. Apparently an important horse-race was to be run that afternoon, for there was an excited shouting of names of possible winners and odds across the public bar. Near me sat the only other person who was alone; he was either a tramp or odd-job man, middle-aged and somewhat wizened. His belongings lay in a bag at his feet; his hand held a short clay pipe to his mouth, and he sat, while forbearing yet to take the final draught from his glass, staring at the counter before him with wrinkled eyes and a tight little smile as of one gazing gratefully at a good fire. Behind him a party of men with bowler hats on the backs of their heads, and pig-like large women, for whom paramount issues seemed at stake, were whiling the time till the race should be run, with semi-belligerent banter. In another corner three men were engaged in a vigorous argument, one occasionally banging a newspaper before him with his fist. The bar-tender hurried to and fro, pausing every minute to snatch a mouthful

of drink from a glass on a shelf, as though serving, as quickly as possible, one more customer. Compared with the immediate moods of those about him, the labourer's stillness seemed almost eternal. I never saw anyone more possessed in himself; as though it were enough, and more than enough, just to be.

He seemed the embodiment of the constant fatalistic living thread of our history; that power of quietness in him went back from generation to generation, born of the earliest arts of life, of the inherited intuitive knowledge of the best way to live within the framework of natural law. And it struck me that that something, to which it is difficult to give any name, but which is inherent in the older country labourer's manner—that difference between him and the rest of England to-day—ought to be my theme. This is a thing quite apart from 'morality', inability to spell correctly, or what is termed narrow-mindedness. Whatever we are gaining in bath-rooms and panel dentistry, we are without doubt losing something much less easily classified. One may call it individual authority, personal sanction for living; at any rate, it is a thing of humble beginnings, of a knowledge of process and of natural law. It is something about a countryman that is like the weather, something that, in a word with him on the commonest subject, gives you a vista of generations. The spark of true culture is there, which has fed the language, the music and all the arts of English life. It is a mistake to think that these gifts fall like manna out of heaven—

they flow up to us from what is considered (since we became divided into 'classes') the lowest stratum in our social system. It may be a matter of paradox, but there is no need to stress the illiterate man's power of expression. His life has been a hard one, materially a grotesque anomaly with industrial 'prosperity'—yet in conditions of poverty and degradation we find the same steady power.

His life in the open air, the domestic arts that his cottage sheltered, have been the making of the English countryside as we know it. And in this anthology I have tried as far as possible to get together passages which bear in some way upon that native quality. Merrie England is not a matter of surmise; there is first-hand evidence of that genius which the enclosures maimed and industrialism killed. Before the tension of competitive money-making, of the need to support a certain social standard of amenity, paralysed the individual life; before water and heat became commodities and the machine departmentalised and insulated vocations one from another; before the grooves of specialisation became so deep that the mind was blinkered and ran in one track, the knowledge of a craft gave a man intuitively a power of judgment over all other branches of life. Because the basic arts of life were homogeneous. Broadcasting, swift communications, give an illusory appearance of unification; they mask the real dispersion of mind that is taking place, the insulation of man from man. The different social temperatures in a modern

railway carriage and in a stage-coach might be compared. Even the old horse-bus driver was a conversational person, to sit beside whom was something of a privilege; the driver of the motor vehicle is necessarily insulated.

Another form of isolation has been brought by motors into country districts. One's circle of friends is no longer the circle of a ten-mile radius. On the contrary, one's circle of friends has small geographical reference. One friend is forty miles in one direction, another twenty-five miles in another, half-a-dozen are in London, one in Hampshire and so on. Thus people living in a place may have no part in that place fundamentally, or in any place. Whereas in the old days whoever lived round about you, unless they were extremely difficult, you fitted into your circle of friendship. The more socially gifted thus helped out the less, and the whole was leavened. Now, by more peremptory standards, we choose only those with whom we are 'in sympathy', the spontaneous functions of local life consequently decay and the number of lonely old people must be legion. Young people must earn their living in cities, so the country that is not within week-end radius of London is given up to the elderly and retired.

My purpose has included the tracing of that sense of community which has been the framework of English country life, coupled with the spirit of locality, which has made one village different from another in appearance, speech and customs. No one, I hope, will accuse

me of trying to exploit a twentieth century nostalgia by the old dodge of the Golden Age; but what I wish to suggest is that, *potentially*, the countryman's home used to feed him, body and spirit, and provide him with work and recreation which were involved like the warp and woof of a fabric; and not departmentalised into work and hobby, or just 'entertainment'. To-day the whole structure of local communities is breaking up, and groping, perhaps, for a sense of a wider communal unit. Whether anything of any value by the standard of human feeling can come of it, in which the personal contact is impossible, is extremely doubtful, as the state-worship of Germany and Italy seems to show. The fluid essence hardens into a concrete symbol; the springs of individual thought and action are paralysed by the hypnotic passes of propaganda, to which this greater community offers itself as an easy prey. The scepticism, the 'narrow-mindedness', the so-called anti-social attitude of the traditional countryman is positively refreshing by contrast.

Now a curious change has come over the general attitude to the country and country things. It is a thing I have noticed when I have been talking to a labourer or farmer, and have soon after found myself in conversation with a typical educated person of to-day. One may illustrate it like this: the labourer walking through a coppice will see one tree more than others because his eye has caught, say, a bough shaped so that it would make a good scythe handle. Or he will pick out with

his particularised observation, a briar from the mass of stems that make up a hedge, suitable for the budding of a standard rose. He almost 'feels' his way—the bough he sees he feels in his hands swinging as a scythe. The farmer will say 'that's a fine tree' with a different meaning from the man in the street. He will pick it out for its long straight trunk, and absence of low-spreading branches. It is timber; and that is not so mercenary a view as it seems. Certainly it is utilitarian, but involved in an hereditary knowledge of the processes of timber, (it is probable there is at least one wheelwright or village carpenter in his lineage), whereby the tree in a sense goes on living after it is felled, as a wagon or a plough, turning his earth or carrying his harvest. Wherever one touches this old country life, at whatever aspect, one is led back to that central common impulse in which use and beauty are one. This comeliness, at once practical and personal, is in contrast to the modern view of Nature; which, comparing best with best, is the aesthetic view. Modern man sees colour and form as intensely (more consciously, certainly), but as symbols of something else which the art life seeks to express. I am not pitting one against the other, it is not a case of that is better than this, only that it is so different. Nor am I exaggerating the satisfaction the mass of people are seeking in fleeing to the country for week-ends. It is not the old life they seek, the life of their ancestors, but that abstract pleasure in scenery, a view, or just silence.

One may say, perhaps, without straining for a unity, that both these aspects *are* present in the labourer, the one consciously, the other unconsciously. The one form of appreciation appears in what he says and does, the other in what he is. The thing that we admire consciously—the sweep of that bough, the light on that budded wood—has been soaking into him unawares for generations. I have met labourers living in lonely places, and simple in that extreme sense between the idiotic and the sublime, who have been the very personification of their surroundings; an inhuman, cyclic, multitudinous life seeming to have crept in upon them as ivy through the windows of an old building.

This 'uneducated' man has no standards of beauty: beauty has not yet been detached from its context. What is certain is that the home he has grown into is as different from what the ordinary visitor sees as the moon from the sun. It proves nothing to point out that the homely swain is the first to cast out the good old things from his cottage and fill it with 'polite' machine-made furniture: in his whole history he has never needed to be aesthetically on guard; spuriousness of that kind has never come within his orbit. But where it touches his work he can tell. Give him a factory-made cart to tip, after a local-made one, and he will let you know all about it. That is in the line of his life: take him out of his tradition and of course you can trap him into anything.

He is a man about whom familiarity clings; it is over

his mind like a garment; the boundaries of his garden make a frontier whose every indentation is mapped in his mind's eye. His tools are often heirlooms. He has no sharp personal life; his personality spreads downward and outward upon his things like the roots of a tree.

Nevertheless, this is not a book specifically about labourers or farmers, or the past or the present. I have simply approached and tried to catch some glint of the genius of the country in an oblique, perhaps the only way. In this, the two view-points, countryman's and country-lover's, seem both involved. I have been concerned first and foremost with the spirit of the thing, and if among the writers there are some that seem to consort oddly with the rest, it is because I have endeavoured not to string together a mass of quotations under a loose title, nor even to sort them out bodily under sub-headings; but to make a book that should be read as other books are read, beginning at the beginning and going on to the end.

I have resisted, as consistently as is human, the temptation to make the easy score of sheer contrast; it has been my hope that juxtaposition might be made a more sensitive instrument than that, and that something might evolve thereby which the passages would not have had in isolation. I have been limited; even anthologies nowadays are overproduced. Almost the whole body of lyrical poetry, for instance, has been precluded by the fact of its having already been given

much more publicity than has been good for its freshness. I have had to steer my way between that careless rapture which the first anthologisers pounced upon, and that pedestrianism which soon becomes tiresome. Likewise I have avoided much that is archaic. Descriptions of gargantuan feasts, of fabulous remedies, seem to me to have no interest to-day but quaintness.

I have not scrupled to use a foreign writer in translation where it suited my purpose. That the thing should cohere and move has been my aim.

In conclusion, my thanks are due to Mrs. Q. D. Leavis for all her help in connection with the anthology.

ADRIAN BELL

THE OPEN AIR

★ I ★

It was a spot which returned upon the memory of those who loved it with an aspect of peculiar and kindly congruity. Smiling champaigns of flowers and fruit hardly do this, for they are permanently harmonious only with an existence of better reputation as to its issues than the present. Twilight combined with the scenery of Egdon Heath to evolve a thing majestic without severity, impressive without showiness, emphatic in its admonition, grand in its simplicity. The qualifications which frequently invest the façade of a prison with far more dignity than is found in the façade of a palace double its size lent to this heath a sublimity in which spots renowned for beauty of the accepted kind are utterly wanting. Fair prospects wed happily with fair times; but alas, if times be not fair! Men have oftener suffered from the mockery of a place too smiling for their reason than from the oppression of surroundings oversadly tinged. Haggard Egdon appealed to a subtler and scarcer instinct, to a more recently learnt emotion, than that which responds to the sort of beauty called charming and fair.

Indeed, it is a question if the exclusive reign of this orthodox beauty is not approaching its last quarter. The new Vale of Tempe may be a gaunt waste in Thule: human souls may find themselves in closer and closer harmony with external things wearing sombreness distasteful to our race when it was young. The time seems near, if it has not actually arrived, when the chastened sublimity of a moor, a sea, or a mountain will be all of nature that is absolutely in keeping with the moods of the more thinking among mankind. And ultimately, to the commonest tourist, spots like Iceland may become what the vineyards and myrtle-gardens of South Europe are to him now; and Heidelberg and Baden be passed unheeded as he hastens from the Alps to the sand-dunes of Scheveningen.

★ 2 ★

For the appearance of old Lucy is the reverse of prepossessing. She is a strange-looking figure, a kind of substantial shadow, standing motionless in the sunshine of the garden. Motionless she will stand—you might mistake her for a field scarecrow—for quite a long time, and when she stirs it is with a slow, dubious movement, as of some piece of antiquity resuming forgotten life. An odd slate-coloured and dishevelled, not quite human, apparition, even on a summer's day—such is Bettesworth's wife, seen at a distance.

As you approach her more nearly the impression of

unattractive strangeness is intensified. Presumably she wears the ordinary clothes of an old peasant woman, but they do not look quite ordinary on her. You are reminded again of the field scarecrow, but there is something else, too, in her appearance—something suggestive of bats' wings or of old cobwebs. A dingy woollen cross-over, once red, fails to weaken the impression produced by the slate-hued things in which the old woman moves so curiously. Her black straw hat is shaped like an inverted bowl, and has a drooping brim, a wide descending brim that hides half her face; and the inky shadow of it seems to be a peculiar atmosphere that she alone moves in. Once, in Bettesworth's garden, where early peas were set, there appeared a strange row of diminutive scarecrows, several of which consisted chiefly of older hats of this pattern, while all were oddly reminiscent of Mrs. Bettesworth. Little witchcraft images of herself they seemed, and the main characteristic of them was uncanny.

Go quite close to the old woman, and the chances are that you will be shocked. She is short of stature, but if you can peer under the hat brim to see more than her bristly chin, you will possibly look hurriedly away again. For the face there, though placid and kindly, is somehow hardly in keeping with our modern times. It is short and broad; the eyes in it have a dark and unspeculative gleam; the teeth have gone and the lips have fallen in, yet are held tightly together. But this is not all—this might be the picture of many a worn-out

working woman, and there is something else than this that makes one unwilling to regard Mrs. Bettesworth. Her face is a face of the fields: it is unhomely, undomesticated. Swarthiest of the swarthy, that she must have been in her young days; there is the dark streak of the moustache to prove it, while dots and specks of blue, like Nature's tattoo marks, are visible here and there on her skin. Yet it cannot be all swarthiness that darkens the old woman's withered features and begrimes the strong creases which run from nostrils to fallen-in mouth. Perhaps it is only the stain and sun-tan of many years spent in the fields, but the aspect of Mrs. Bettesworth's face is unwashed. And there are her hands like it; and there, too, where the bodice wants a brooch, the dark coarse skin of neck and bosom owes some redness to the sun, but little enough, if anything at all, to womanly care of the person.

She is dishevelled. Imagine once more in one glance, the wrinkled, broad face shaded by the hat, and now observe the grey hair, how it straggles out below the hat brim. It is not cared for or twisted up, it is too scanty for that. It hangs down rather stiffly and inclined to stick out towards the nape of the neck, but there is neither regularity of length to it nor evenness of disposal. You can see what it is—the remains of strong black hair turned grey at last and irregularly shortened, drooping in wisps under the shadowy hat brim, back behind that swarthy wrinkled face. And there, in the enigmatic face, the eyes give no clue to the thoughts,

but all is cryptic and unfamiliar. You feel that you are looking upon an English peasant woman of perhaps the fifteenth century, and she seems out of place, out of touch with our times. She is one who has been overburdened by strange burdens. Even the mild-eyed placidity discernible in her countenance has its afflicting side—it is the sign of resignation to such a fate as few women experience to-day. She looks obedient and quiet and dumb, like an overdriven animal; and in that look you may read her history. For she is of the fields, one of their unvalued products; and the fields have, as it were, overlaid her humanity with an enigmatic and half-dreadful composure like their own.

★3★

One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point

With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin pinnace; lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct,
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree;
There in her mooring place I left my bark,—
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;

But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

⋆4⋆

High above, above the light tracery of hazel, the weird oaks tangled in the sunset. Below, in the first shadows, drooped hosts of little white flowers, so silent and sad; it seemed like a holy communion of pure wild things, numberless, frail and folded meekly in the evening light. Other flower companies are glad; stately barbaric hordes of blue-bells, merry-headed cowslip groups, even light, tossing wood-anemones; but snowdrops are sad and mysterious. We have lost their meaning. They do not belong to us, who ravish them. The girls bent among them, touching them with their fingers, and symbolising the yearning which I felt. Folded in the twilight, these conquered flowerets are sad like forlorn little friends of dryads.

'What do they mean, do you think?' said Lettie in a low voice, as her white fingers touched the flowers, and her black furs fell on them.

'There are not so many this year,' said Leslie.

'They remind me of mistletoe, which is never ours, though we wear it,' said Emily to me.

'What do you think they say—what do they make you think, Cyril?' Lettie repeated.

'I don't know. Emily says they belong to some old, wild lost religion. They were the symbol of tears, perhaps, to some strange-hearted Druid folk before us.'

'More than tears,' said Lettie. 'More than tears, they are so still. Something out of an old religion, that we have lost. They make me feel afraid.'

'What should you have to fear?' asked Leslie.

'If I knew I shouldn't fear,' she answered. 'Look at all the snowdrops'—they hung in dim, strange flecks among the dusky leaves—'look at them—closed up, retreating, powerless. They belong to some knowledge we have lost, that I have lost and that I need. I feel afraid. They seem like something in fate. Do you think, Cyril, we can lose things off the earth—like mastodons, and those old monstrosities—but things that matter—wisdom?'

★ 5 ★

Who fancied what a pretty sight
This Rock would be if edged around
With living snow-drops? circlet bright!
How glorious to this orchard-ground!
Who loved the little Rock, and set
Upon its head this coronet?

Was it the humour of a child?
Or rather of some gentle maid,
Whose brows, the day that she was styled
The shepherd-queen, were thus arrayed?

Of man mature, or matron sage?
Or old man toying with his age?

I asked; 'twas whispered; The device
To each and all might well belong:
It is the Spirit of Paradise
That prompts such work, a Spirit strong,
That gives to all the self-same bent
Where life is wise and innocent.

★6★

When you think of the youth that you have lost, the times when it seems to you now that life was most poignantly good may not be the ones when everything seemed at the time to go well with your plans, and the world, as they say, to be at your feet; rather some few unaccountable moments when nothing took place that was out of the way and yet some word of a friend's, or a look on the face of the sky, the taste of a glass of spring water, the plash of laughter and oars heard across midsummer meadows at night raised the soul of enjoyment within you to strangely higher powers of itself. That spirit bloweth and is still: it will not rise for our whistling nor keep a time-table; no wine that we know can give us anything more than a fugitive caricature of its ecstasies. When it has blown free we remember it always, and know, without proof, that while the rapture was there we were not drunk, but

wise; that for a moment some intervening darkness had thinned and we were seeing further than we can see now into the heart of life.

★7★

I loved the early morning; it was luxurious to lie there, half-awake, and half-aware that there was a pleasantly eventful day in front of me. . . Presently I would get up and lean on the window-ledge to see what was happening in the world outside. . . There was a starling's nest under the window where the jasmine grew thickest, and all of a sudden I heard one of the birds dart away with a soft flurry of wings. Hearing it go, I imagined how it would fly boldly across the garden; soon I was up and staring at the tree-tops which loomed motionless against a flushed and brightening sky. Slipping into some clothes I opened my door very quietly and tiptoed along the passage and down the stairs. There was no sound except the first chirping of the sparrows in the ivy. I felt as if I had changed since the Easter holidays. The drawing-room door creaked as I went softly in and crept across the beeswaxed parquet floor. Last night's half-consumed candles and the cat's half-empty bowl of milk under the gate-legged table seemed to belong neither here nor there, and my own silent face looked queerly at me out of the mirror. And there was the familiar photograph of *Love and Death*, by Watts, with its

secret meaning which I could never quite formulate in a thought, though it often touched me with a vague emotion of pathos. When I unlocked the door into the garden the early morning air met me with its cold purity; on the stone step were the bowls of roses and delphiniums and sweet peas which Aunt Evelyn had carried out there before she went to bed; the scarlet disc of the sun had climbed an inch above the hills. Thrushes and blackbirds hopped and pecked busily on the dew-soaked lawn, and a pigeon was cooing monotonously from the belt of woodland which sloped from the garden toward the Weald. Down there in the belt of river-mist a goods train whistled as it puffed steadily away from the station with a distinctly heard clanking of buffers. How little I knew of the enormous world beyond that valley and those low green hills.

★8★

I walked along the bank of the Seine this morning of frost, between crystal brushwood. The poplars on the other bank are scarcely etched in airy lines upon the mist. You guess at blue sky: seagulls skim these ghostly trees with a white wing.

This vaporous countryside, where all is silence, purity of frost, the rose joy of dawn, must herald the gardens of Paradise. Deep foliage with grapes in shadow or sun, roses that shed their petals when we breathe their

fragrance, beautiful evenings—all these things are of the earth.

Barges glide by, bearing their strange families. A man, all muffled up, leans against the tiller; a woman goes down through a trap-door. Someone throws a bucket into the stream; it comes up again on the end of a rope, spilling a little of the water again as it travels

Charming gesture! It must be very old and so simple that the machines have spared it. I ponder on that farm that Goethe visited in France: it is still to be seen, just as he described it, in all countries. It is luxury that changes, and that is bustled along by fashion. I muse on this modest, severe style that alone perpetuates a living thought across the ages.

★9★

It is a winter morning. An hour before daylight Jim rises from his bed, which, as he is a married man, is in an upper room of a four-roomed cottage. He has slept in his shirt, put on dry the night before, and clad in this he goes barefooted downstairs to the living room, where there is a wide, open hearth. On this is a heap of wood-ash, grey and dead. But when it is gently stirred with a stick, crackles of sparks leap from its heart and there is glowing charcoal which lights an armful of dry wood almost at once. Jim's clothes after his return from work the night before had been hung

or spread where they would get the heat from the ashes till morning. Some have dried, others are still damp. He pulls on socks and a pair of still clammy fustian trousers, and pushes his feet into hobnailed boots. Then he strips off the shirt he has worn during the night and puts it across a chair for use again that evening. An iron pot containing a meal porridge is pushed further into the hot ashes. Then, naked to the waist, he steps through a door to the washhouse. He pumps a full bucket of water, takes a dipperful, and empties it into a tin washing bowl. The dipper is filled again and he takes a long drink from it. Then he sluices himself with icy water and rubs himself dry on a towel that hangs by the door. After this he goes back to the warmer living-room, where his working shirt, a long-sleeved waistcoat, and thick fustian coat are put on. Then a plate, knife and loaf are taken from the cupboard. He starts to cut a thick slice from the loaf, then hesitates and finally cuts a smaller one than he had intended. There are others beside himself to share it. A long-handled iron spoon is used to scoop some of the half-warmed mess of porridge from pot to plate. He adds a pinch of salt, dips small bits of bread into the mess, and eats hungrily till the plate is cleared. There are a couple of old corn sacks hanging on the wall. He wraps one of these round his loins and another over the still damp shoulders of his coat. No one else has stirred in the cottage; but Jim, being the carter at the farm a short distance down the road, has to get there early in

order to have his horses watered and fed before they are needed for waggon or dung cart when the other hands arrive. He steps outside the house and closes the door at once against the cold before walking down the short path that ends at a wicket gate opening on to the highway.

★ 10 ★

So spends many a farmer of the old stamp his day, and at night he takes his seat on the settle, under the old wide chimney—his wife has her little work-table set near—the 'wenches' darning their stockings, or making up a cap for Sunday, and the men sitting on the other side of the hearth with their shoes off. He now enjoys of all things to talk over his labours and plans with the men—they canvass the best method of doing this and that—lay out the course of to-morrow—what land is to be broke up, or laid down; where barley, wheat, oats, etc., shall be sown, or if they be growing, when they shall be cut. In harvest-time, lambing-time, in potato setting and gathering time, in fact, almost all summer long, there is no sitting on the hearth—it is out of bed with the sun, and after the long hard day—supper, and to bed again.

The effect of the drainage was already most remarkable. The workmen called it 'beautiful'; and though nothing can present a more dreary look than a fresh drained field with all the cold varieties of subsoil lying exposed along the lines of the drains, I could not help feeling the truth of the expression applied as it was prospectively rather than to the actual scene before the eye. It was 'beautiful' in the same sense that many a rough-looking act, and many a painful soul-subduing thought and many a rainy day of life's adversities is 'beautiful'—by its consequences; and I always liked the word, so pregnant with faith in what is unseen except by the mental eye that 'views the Future in the Instant'. Inexperience or ignorance would have called it intensely ugly, and would have preferred the previous smooth surface of the field, dank, cold and intractable as it was. . . .

'Well! You are a-going deep to be sure!' said Mr. Greening, following the fresh-turned furrow, and picking up an antediluvian lump of subsoil now and then, and crushing it between his fingers. 'Why, there's plenty of sand here: this'll be mild enough for anything presently; you don't call this a stiff soil?'

'It has lain like a stubborn brute that wouldn't rise, for work or play, ever since I have known it. It won't know itself next year! It has never borne Turnip or Barley, since the Flood—from which, in fact, it has never recovered, I suppose, till the draining-tools have

bled it in this way. How little one can say what a soil is, till it is drained!'

'It does one's heart good to look at it now, however,' replied Mr. Greening; 'doesn't it make you happy-like to see this sort of change, and feel that you have done it? It does me.'

'So happy, that at the end of a winter's day of draining-work I have spent hours of delicious idle reverie, with the Lamp wasting beside me as I sat alone, dreaming the day's work over again; seeing, yet with closed eyes, the long pent-up poison oozing away down its narrow channels—poison no longer! and thinking of the future showers that will percolate and filter through the loosened soil and subsoil three or four feet deep, like some freed and gladdened thing.'

★12★

Before taking leave of these hardy inhabitants of the fells and wastes, whose cottages were surrounded with whins and heather, I must observe that they always appeared to me, notwithstanding their apparent poverty, to enjoy health and happiness in a degree surpassing that of most other men. Their daily fare was coarse bread, potatoes, oatmeal porridge and milk, only varied by their boiling the pot with animal food, cabbage, or other succulent vegetables, and broth, on Sundays. When tired, at night, with labour, having few cares to

perplex them, they lay down and slept soundly, and arose refreshed from their hard beds early next morning. I have always felt much pleasure in revisiting them, and, over a tankard of ale, in listening to their discourse. It was chiefly upon local biography, in which they sometimes traced the pedigree of their neighbours a long way back. With the aged men I felt much amused. From the avidity with which they gathered news, they seemed to live upon it. Several of them met every day at the lodge, or earth-built hovel, close by my father's pit, for the purpose of being gratified in this way. The carts and wains came in all directions, and many of them from a great distance, for coals, the drivers of which imparted to them all they knew of what was going on in their several neighbourhoods:

(This lodge, having always a good fire kept on in it, with a bed of straw on each side, bounded by the trunks of two old trees, to answer the double purpose of bedstocks and seats, often proved a comfortable asylum to the benighted, weary, shivering traveller wandering on the road.)

★13★

Howe shall ye knowe seasonable tyme? (to sowe) Go uppon the lande, that is plowed and if it synge or crye, or make any noyse under thy fete, then it is too wete to sowe; And if it make no noyse and wyll beare thy horses, thanne sowe in the name of God.

★14★

In the appearance of a scythe—a whimsical friend avers, too fantastically—so slender and yet strong, so graceful, so keen and so aquiline withal about the nose, there is every mark of the aristocrat; it is the grandee among country tools; an ancient and honourable lineage is betokened in every one of its shapely curves. Upon prongs and forks and shovels you must look with suspicion—there is no telling to what base ends they have been applied. Such things as rakes and hoes you may despise for humble grubbers in the dirt, as they are; even the fag-hook and the bill lend themselves to every hand and lack exclusiveness; but there is nothing common nor unclean about the scythe, which stands apart with a sort of resemblance to the sword of chivalry, as a formidable substitute for which it has in fact sometimes been used.

Without indulging such far-fetched fancies, it must still be owned that scythes have a charm quite singular among tools. Their shape alone might account for it; smooth and sinuous, with deadly possibilities lurking somewhere in their aspect, they do certainly fascinate. It is a severe and simple beauty theirs, as good as that of Greek statues, unspoiled by prettiness, comparable to the exactness of natural things; such a beauty as only generations of single-minded attention to what is fit can give to any human product. But they make an even greater appeal to the imagination than to the sight; for

perhaps in all the world there is no other thing so intimately associated with the summer at its best, and its best only. At sight of this tool one does not always think consciously of the deep meadows and the June days, but it is odd if some of their beauty does not find its way into one's spirit. And from the brave English weather that they recall, a feeling of kinship with the generations of men who have rejoiced in it with scythes in their hands is never very far remote. The care they have bestowed, the skill they have expended, upon shaft and blade, and all the queer ideas and traditions that have gathered round the subject, cling to this thing of wood and iron and give it dignity. Whatever one thinks, or hears said, about a scythe is always agreeable.

For this sufficient reason it was pleasant when a contributor to one of the daily papers related last summer how he had been annoyed to find that his gardener had left a new scythe all the preceding winter in a damp place, so that it became covered with rust, and how the gardener had excused himself, alleging that 'it does 'em good; it rusts the iron out of 'em.' The theory seemed preposterous; not so a certain smack of the countryside that seemed to come with it. It was antique enough, too, to have spread over the Southern Counties. The note in the daily paper was dated either from Wiltshire or Somerset—I forget which; but several old Surrey mowers questioned on the point gave the same explanation, and the other day I had it

again from a comparatively young one. A man, this, of much experience for his years—he has harvested in Sussex, worked as a navvy on the railway, knows how to graft trees, and in short is living the old-fashioned many-sided life of his kind, being now engaged for a time as a gardener. As a gardener he had been sent to buy a new scythe because he knew what to buy, and he showed me his purchase. 'He's a little rusty', he said, 'and that's why I chose 'un. He'd bin kept a little longer in the shop than the others, and as soon as I see 'n I said, "That's the scythe for me." See what a nice thin edge he got a'ready, after two or three sharpin's. They're better for being rusty. . . . Well, I suppose it rusts the iron out of 'em. Anyhow, they cuts the better. That's why you'll always see a man hangs up his scythe in an apple-tree or somewhere like that for the winter, purpose for to get 'n rusty.' At hearing again the old formal explanation I laughed; it has been said on so many summer mornings, by so many good-tempered men, whose business was not to think, but to keep their scythe blades keen.

★15★

The differences between a hayfield in those days and one in 1933 are many. Then, when Farmer Giles after consulting local portents had settled the place and date of 'beginning the hay', he would try to arrange that all

his ordinary farm hands should then be free to take their allotted places in the meadows. All mowers were warned to be there by sunrise on the appointed day, with scythes whetted to razor-like keenness, and both handles and blades properly adjusted to deal with the long grass. Early, whilst the dew was still heavy, the men, clothed in shirt and trousers, gathered on the edge of the selected field at Lane end. Trousers were fastened with a strap below the knee, which allowed free joint play and also took some weight off the leather belt which upheld them at the waist. To the belt a broad bit of leather was affixed, and this rested behind just clear of the man's hips, and made a carrier for the all-important whetstone. These stones were most carefully chosen, of a grain calculated to give a slightly rough, but yet smoothly keen, edge to the steel. . . .

The men file along the hedge at the end of the field to where their work begins. The best mower of them all takes post on the left of the line, by the fence which further on is pierced by the gateway that had been the place of assembly. The rest turn the corner and range themselves at well-judged intervals. The leader of them is known by varying local titles which I have forgotten, but all signifying that he is the fastest mower of them all. The others must hold the pace he sets or feel themselves disgraced. I am pretty sure, however, that somewhere in this country I have heard the term 'the ringer' (by which name the fastest shearer in an Aus-

tralian wool-shed is still known), and I think that this was on a Wiltshire farm.

After a glance to see that his neighbour was ready to follow on at the right moment the left-hand man gave a final hitch to his corduroys, moistened palms in the usual manner, gripped the handles of his scythe, brought it well across to his right, then brought the blade with a full swinging sweep through the tall grass to his extreme reach on the left. A foot width of herbage toppled and lay flat in an unbroken swathe; packed a little closer than it grew by the small rigid arc that bulged from near the base of the long crookedness of the scythe handle to the heel of the steel blade. With perfectly measured swing the sweeping cuts continued, and after each one the mower sidled with widely separated feet some inches forward to gain position for the next. When about a couple of yards forward had been cut, the second man took his first swing, which ended where that of his predecessor had begun, and the others followed in their turns, so that in a few minutes the whole line of men were advancing in echelon, each with just sufficient room to swing his scythe safely clear of his neighbour. It used to be a matter of honour that everyone should do his best to keep position, never allowing the one preceding him to increase the distance originally between them. The pace of the whole line depended either on the judgment or on the capacity of the leader. He usually started the morning by setting quite a moderate pace so that the slowest of his follow-

ers should have no excuse for not keeping station. But as the day progressed he would begin to quicken the swing of his scythe. Then less skilful or less lasting mowers might lose ground and fall behind their next in line. . . .

At last the sun has attained an altitude which brings it to a position which is only one hour east of due south. (No summer time in those benighted days.) 'Elevenses.' Blessed word! The workers have been thinking of it for an hour or more, and it was the exception rather than the rule for them to swallow a draught of anything liquid until the sun was high. If you did you would be thirsty all day. The line is moving, for about the twentieth time, slowly back towards the starting point and is nearing it when cheerful soprano voices are heard coming down the short lane that ends beside the gateway, with small baskets and empty jars. Soon afterwards there is the rattle of wheels from the farm gig, driven by farmer's wife, with a brace of 'bustious boys' of walking age perched beside her. With them are the half of a forty-pound cheese, a large 'batch' of bread, and an eighteen-gallon cask of home-brewed beer.

As each mower 'cuts out' he sets the blade of his scythe forward for safety into the uncut grass, into which even the most adventurous or careless feet of women or youngsters dare not trample. Then wiping his forehead, and his mind concentrating on one great central thought, he makes for the gateway. Arrived, he

notes a dissolving cluster of women who are bearing full jars and baskets from the gig. There is the moisture he craves and a cask with a tap already inserted. Beer! His wife meets him and hands an uncorked jar. He nods briefly, draws his hand across sticky, clammy lips, and lifts the familiar vessel. . . . The gods must have had attractive temporal joys to offer mortals if they had better things to give than the all-absorbing ecstasy of that draught. . . .

There is a laugh from some young ones when one of the older men, who in passing the gig halted for a moment to view the cheese, which is being cut into mighty chunks by the farm mistress, and then lowered his head and peered. 'Fine cheese thickee, missis. Zee wur mousie's bin.' The laugh from the others is followed by affirmative murmurs, for every countryman knows that if there is a great pile of cheeses in the storage loft and a rare mouse finds its way to them and finally, after inspection, nibbles one, the cheese selected for the honour is surely the finest of them all. The common mouse is truly the best judge of good cheese in the world.

As the jars empty or the cheese disappears, women go to the gig for fresh supplies whilst the men slice the onions brought out in the baskets from their own gardens with the 'screw of baccy' which tops the meal. With this in their pipes they rest thankfully till they grow drowsy and then the hum of talk round them slowly dwindles. The day is hot, so there will be two

full hours of rest, which can be made up when the sun has gone and there is once again some moisture, helpful to the scythes, forming on the grass.

★16★

To build a farm-waggon that would turn round in reasonable space—something less than Farnham Park—was a problem that needed attention even in marking-out the main-timbers for the sawing. The trouble was that the front wheels would not 'lock' (that is turn) full circle under the waggon. For reasons not to be discussed here the said wheels were too high, so that about half-way round the upper edges of them clashed into the body and were stopped. If then the horse still went on turning he might have overset the waggon or else caused it to skid, but to turn it, even at right angles, was impossible.

How to prepare for this no carpenter could be expected to know; only by faithfully following a certain tradition could the wheelwright partially meet the difficulty. One detail, as I have said, had to be provided for on the very saw-pit. It's true, there were other reasons for sawing-out that gentle upward curve in the front of a waggon, that rise of the floor-timbers; but this also was one reason for it: if the floor stood up a little out of the way it allowed the foremost wheel to get an inch or two further round before being blocked.

Accordingly, that beautiful boat-like lift of the front of the waggon was carefully prepared on the saw-pit, not for beauty but for use. . . .

The ground must be pictured therefore over which this organism was to pass to and fro. In fact the waggon dimensions become a sort of photographic negative, showing, to those who know what it means, the normal English farm land and the country lanes.

And what sort of land, or what lanes, do the four-foot-two waggon-wheels reflect? Not the smooth road —white with dust perhaps, or slimy with mud but always fairly even—not the made road traversed by commerce. The three-foot wheels of dray or van were very well on roads like that. But the farm-waggon had to go over a different surface. Horses had to pull it all about the meadows, the furrowed harvest fields, the miry root-fields. It had to jolt along deep-rutted lanes; to bump into ditches on one side while it strained, perhaps, over a tussock of grass, or a mole-hill, on the other side. There were gateways trodden deep in mud by cattle; the 'lands' left by the plough made the stubble-field wavy as the sea; now the waggon had to pass across a stream, now across the stumps of a newly-cut coppice. And at any of these difficulties an axle-bed too low might have brought all to a standstill, or, being stopped with sudden jerk, involved breakage of timbers and perhaps death for waggoner or frightened horse. Certainly it would have been a mistake to build the front waggon-wheels any lower.

And, for similar reasons, the alternative of raising the body higher, out of the reach of the wheels altogether, was never contemplated so far as I know. An image of the waggoner, which comes into the mental farm picture just here and is perhaps a little out of place, shows a man from five to six feet tall, hard at work; and one sees how awkward for his stature a higher waggon-body might have been, whether for pitching hay into it or for lifting sacks from it on to his shoulders. Small heed, however, was paid to matters of mere human convenience, by farmers or labourers faced with the everlasting task of taming England's soil into new fertility every season. That was the central object of having a waggon at all, and there is no doubt that, convenience or none, the waggon-body would have been carried higher above the ground had there been any advantage therefrom. But in fact it would have been awkward—awkward and dangerous; seeing that on those uneven fields, those deep-rutted lanes, a load too high must have turned over. Such a contingency might not be risked. Necessity in fact fixed for waggons the lines between too high and too low; and in generations of experiment farm men found these invisible lines and wheelwrights learnt how to get every farm-waggon trundling along on them.

This illustrates, in one point, the conditions in which the waggon grew into a thing of beauty, comparable to a fiddle or a boat. Necessity gave the law at every detail, and in scores of ways insisted on conform-

ity. The waggon-builder was obliged to be always faithful, to know always what was imposed on him, in wheels, shafts, axles, carriages, everything.

The nature of this knowledge should be noted. It was set out in no book. It was not scientific. I never met a man who professed any other than an empirical acquaintance with the waggon-builder's lore. My own case was typical. I knew that the hind wheels had to be five feet two inches high and the fore-wheels four feet two; that the 'sides' must be cut from the best four-inch heart of oak, and so on. This sort of thing I knew, and in vast detail in course of time; but I seldom knew why. And that is how most other men knew. The lore was a tangled net-work of country prejudices, whose reasons were known in some respects here, in others there, and so on. In farm-yard, in tap-room, at market, the details were discussed over and over again; they were gathered together for remembrance in village workshop; carters, smiths, farmers, wheel-makers, in thousands handed on each his own little bit of understanding, passing it to his son or to the wheelwright of the day, linking up the centuries. But for the most part the details were but dimly understood; the whole body of knowledge was a mystery, a piece of folk knowledge, residing in the folk collectively, but never wholly in any individual. 'However much a man knows', old Bettesworth used to say, 'there's sure to be somebody as knows more.' And that is characteristic especially of all folk knowledge.

In this temper the shop, I feel sure, turned out good work. Especially the wheels which George Cook used to make were, I am bound to think, as good as any that had been built under the eyes of two experts like my father and his father. Cook, it is pretty sure, took his own time; but what a workman he was! There was another wheelwright in the shop whose wife used to take out garden produce in a little van: and when the van wanted new wheels, this man would not make them himself but asked that George Cook might make them. Truly, it was a liberal education to work under Cook's guidance. I never could get axe or plane or chisel sharp enough to satisfy him; but I never doubted, then or since, that his tiresome fastidiousness over tools and handiwork sprang from a knowledge as valid as any artist's. He knew, not by theory, but more delicately, in his eyes and fingers. Yet there were others almost his match—men who could make the wheels, and saw out on the saw-pit the other timbers for a dung-cart, and build the cart and paint it—preparing the paint first; or, if need be, help the blacksmith tyring the wheels. And two things are notable about these men. Of the first, indeed, I have already given some hint; it is, that in them was stored all the local lore of what good wheelwright's work should be like. The century-old tradition was still vigorous in them. They knew each customer and his needs; understood his carters

and his horses and the nature of his land; and finally took a pride in providing exactly what was wanted in every case. So, unawares, they lived as integral parts in the rural community of the English. Overworked and underpaid, they none the less enjoyed life, I am sure. They were friends, as only a craftsman can be, with timber and iron. The grain of the wood told secrets to them.

★18★

Neither men nor women spared themselves as to labour or long hours. I know of a carpenter with his two sons, Godalming men, who finished a fencing job at Portsmouth one evening at half-past five, and walked all night the thirty-seven miles back to Godalming to be ready at the master's place at six the next morning to see about the next job. They not only walked but trundled a hand-cart with their tools, including spades and iron bars. They thought nothing of walking to jobs at Putney, Wimbledon or Wandsworth.

Mothers of labourers' families were glad to get their girls out at an early age into any respectable family where they would be fed in return for their work.

One old woman that I knew well told me that she went out at the age of twelve.

'It was a carpenter's family', she said, 'and there was eleven children. Yes, that was my first place, for a year.

I didn't get no wages, only my food, one frock and one bonnet, and a shillin' to take home.

'Then I was hired for a year to go to a farm where the master was a widower, and after that at another farm where there was two ladies. They was the particularest ladies I ever knowd. It ud do any girl good to go and live with such as they. There was the oak stairs —it was always a clean pail of water to every two steps: and I'd as much pride in it as they had.'

'My wages never got as fur as four pound. Best place I ever lived in was at Mr. Wood's at Hambledon. Quietest and best master I ever lived with. There was the red-brick kitchen floor. I used to flow he down with a green broom; best of brooms for bricks; makes the floors red. You makes 'em of the green broom as grows on the common. After I left, there was always a bit of green holly at Christmas, and any win'fall apples he always give me. Ah! he was a good master. He minded me when I was married, and time and again he sent me a bit of beef—till he died—and then my beef died.

'One farm I lived in was nigh some rough ground where tramp people lived, and my missis use to send me out with beautiful gruel to the tramp women in the tents when there was a baby come. It was a very old farmhouse where I lived, with gurt beams athurt the ceilin'.

'But Mr. Woods he was the best man. One day after I left him I was at his place, and he had a cold leg of

mutton, and what does he do but take a knife and cut'n in two and give me one piece.

'And one time when bread was so dear he says, ''Here's a shillin' to get a loaf''—Ah! we soon cut *he* up.

'I'm seventy-six, and some days don't know how to move about. The rheumatics they do crucify me something crool. I says if anyone wants to punish me let 'em give me a stoopin' job. It seems to turn my heart upside down.'

★19★

The carrying of the sheaves from the stackyard into the barn, which was a part of the house rent, was heavy work. My mother did that all the winter before I was born and the winter after, besides shearing in harvest time—the hours being in harvest between sun and sun. The stack carrying was done thus: Two women had a barrow made of two poles, with canvas stretched between the poles; upon which canvas was laid ten or twelve sheaves. The two women then carried that load through the yard and up a gangway to the upper floor of the barn, meeting another couple going down empty. They laid down their barrow, and rolled the sheaves out of it on the floor, where another woman was 'loosing out' and laying the loosened sheaves upon a table, where the man who 'fed in' to the mill stood. One woman stood on the stack outside and forked down the

sheaves to the ground; while another on the ground assisted to load the women who carried the barrows. At this work and in the harvest field did my mother bear the burden of heavy labour and of me. After I was born I was carried to her on such occasions to be suckled. My brother James has told me that the duty of carrying me devolved chiefly on him.

Should you ever be in Scotland and see Springfield, you will find a row of shabby-looking tiled sheds, such they continued to be when I was there last, the centre one of which is about twelve feet by fourteen, and not so high in the walls as will allow a man to get in without stooping. That place without ceiling, or anything beneath the bare tiles of the roof; without a floor save the common clay; without a cupboard or recess of any kind; with no grate but the iron bars which the tenants carried to it, built up and took away when they left it; with no partition of any kind save what the beds made; with no window save four small panes on one side—it was this house, still a hind's house at Springfield, for which, to obtain leave to live in, my mother sheared the harvest and carried the stacks.

How eight children and father and mother were huddled in that place is not easily told. The worst of it was, that food was so very dear, clothes were so very dear, as to us not to be obtainable, and national glory was so very dear—that glory which Europe was mad about at that time, and for which we, like others, had to pay, that even those bare walls, for which so much

of my mother's labour had to be paid in rent, were less comfortable than they might have been.

Your Uncle William was a stripling when I was born, and worked for such wages as a youth could obtain in that part of the country. When he came home at night, my father has told me, he stripped off his coat, took off his hat, put on his night cap, got down the 'elshen box,' with awls, hamp, rosin, scraps of leather, lasts, tackets and hammer; and taking all the children, one by one, as if he had been the father of the family, examined their feet to see which of them had shoes most in need of mending—for all needed repairs, new shoes being in those dear years out of the question. He would then sit down and cobble the shoes by the light of the fire until near midnight, while our mother would mend the other clothes of those in bed, or spin lint to make yarn for the weaver to weave shirting, or card and spin wool for stockings, or darn stockings that were daily decaying. William would then end the day with his private prayer, and go to bed. He would rise at four o'clock in the mornings, and do the heaviest part of James's work amongst the farmer's cows and other cattle, before going to his own day's work two or three miles distant. James was too young for the heavy task of cleaning the cow-houses every morning, which had to be done; but as he could make shift, with the assistance of one or two of the other children nearest him in age, to carry straw and turnips to the cattle, and give them water; and as the payment of the few pence per day was an ob-

ject of importance to the family (I do not now remember what James got per day; it was, however, less than I subsequently got when a boy for the same kind of work, and my wages were sixpence per day), William got up every morning to do part of the work to keep James in the employment.

★ 20 ★

On the day that I was eight years of age, I left school, and began to work fourteen hours a day in the fields, with from forty to fifty other children, of whom, even at that early age, I was the eldest. We were followed all day long by an old man carrying a long whip in his hand which he did not forget to use. A great many of the children were only five years of age. You will think that I am exaggerating, but I am *not;* it is as true as the Gospel. Thirty-five years ago (1850-60) is the time I speak of, and the place, Croyland in Lincolnshire, nine miles from Peterborough. I could even now name several of the children who began at the age of five to work in the gangs, and also the name of the ganger.

We always left the town, summer and winter, the moment the old Abbey clock struck six. We had to walk a very long way to our work, never much less than two miles each way, and very often five miles each way. The large farms all lay a good distance from the town, and it was on those farms that we worked. In the

winter, by the time we reached our work, it was light enough to begin, and of course we worked until it was dark and then had our long walk home. I never remember to have reached home sooner than six and more often seven, even in winter. In the summer we did not leave the fields in the evening until the clock had struck six, and then of course we must walk home, and this walk was no easy task for us children who had worked hard all day on the ploughed fields.

In all the four years I worked in the fields, I never worked one hour under cover of a barn, and only once did we have a meal in a house. And I shall never forget that one meal or the woman who gave us it. It was a most terrible day. The cold east wind (I suppose it was an east wind, for surely no wind ever blew colder), the sleet and snow which came every now and then in showers seemed almost to cut us to pieces. We were working upon a large farm that lay half-way between Croyland and Peterborough. Had the snow and sleet come continuously we should have been allowed to come home, but because it only came at intervals, of course we had to stay. I have been out in all sorts of weather but never remember a colder day. Well, the morning passed along somehow. The ganger did his best for us by letting us have a run in our turns, but that did not help us very much because we were too numbed with the cold to be able to run much. Dinner-time came, and we were preparing to sit down under a hedge and eat our cold dinner and drink our cold tea,

when we saw the shepherd's wife coming towards us, and she said to our ganger, 'Bring these children into my house and let them eat their dinner there.' We went into that very small two-roomed cottage, and when we got into the largest room there was not standing room for us all, but this woman's heart was large, even if her house was small, and so she put her few chairs and table out into the garden, and then we all sat down in a ring upon the floor. She then placed in our midst a very large saucepan of hot boiled potatoes, and bade us help ourselves. Truly, although I have attended scores of grand parties and banquets since that time, not one of them has seemed half as good to me as that meal did. I well remember that woman. She was one of the plainest women I ever knew; in fact she was what the world would call quite ugly, and yet I can't think of her even now without thinking of that verse in one of our hymns where it says:

'No, Earth has angels though their forms are moulded
But of such clay as fashions all below,
Though harps are wanting, and bright pinions folded,
We know them by the love-light on their brow.'

Had I time I could write how our gang of children, one winter's night, had to wade for nearly half a mile through the flood. These floods occur nearly every winter, when the Wash overflows her banks. In harvest-time we left home at four o'clock in the morning, and stayed in the fields until it was dark, about nine

o'clock. As a rule the gangs were disbanded during the harvest, each child going to work with its own friends, and when the corn was cut, the whole families would go gleaning the corn left in the fields, this being, of course, the gleaner's own property. A great many families gleaned sufficient to keep them in bread for the whole of the winter.

For four years, summer and winter, I worked in these gangs—no holidays of any sort, with the exception of very wet days and Sundays—and at the end of that time it felt like Heaven to me when I was taken to the town of Leeds, and put to work in the factory. Talk about White Slaves, the Fen districts at that time was the place to look for them.

★ 21 ★

Every autumn, if possible, or in the earliest spring, there was one journeying at least to river-sides for rushes, in anticipation of the spring task of 'hop-tying.' The rushes were brought home (I remember stumbling through them with wonder the first time I entered Bettesworth's cottage), and strewn on the floor, that they might be trodden into lissomness; and there they remained for weeks, as it were promising May. For in May, when the hops are 'poled' and the young growth is beginning its swift ascension, women must to the plantations with their rushes, and carefully tie the

new hop shoots each to its pole. It is a weary, cramping task, followed day after day, and ill-paid on piecework terms, yet not without compensations fluttering down upon the women with the spring sunshine or shower.

The hops once tied, there would be no further room for Mrs. Bettesworth in the gardens until September, when the picking commenced; but meanwhile other field-work would be plentiful enough. With June comes in the airy upland hay-making; that of the deep water-meadows follows it close, and before the hay is well got in there is the corn harvest beginning, in which women's work was not yet superfluous when Lucy Bettesworth was younger. And then autumn brought its own less thrilling tasks, that left the fields desolate and naked to the oncoming of winter, beginning with the potato harvest in weather still sun-softened, ending with the swede-trimming on bleak and frozen hillsides amongst the folded sheep. It would be erroneous to suppose that Mrs. Bettesworth's life at all these varied toils could have been enviable—it was a life of crushing fatigue, of stinging hardship; but to think it only hardship and fatigue would be almost equally wrong. For it is not credible that she could live thirty years in the sunlight without caring for it or without appetite for the tonic of air. Be that as it may, for nearly that length of time, not counting what preceded her marriage, she was wholly of the fields. 'Twenty-seven year', says Bettesworth, 'she went with

me down into Sussex. The farmer used to ask after her. '' 'Ave ye brought the little dark woman?'' he used to say.' That she could undertake this annual pilgrimage is evidence of her detachment from things domestic. She had no family, and therefore nothing to keep her at home. Through those dim twenty-seven years at least, her history, whatever it may have been, must have unfolded chiefly in the open air.

As a worker 'the little dark woman' maintained an efficiency still remembered with respect by her husband—a competent judge. Throughout middle-life, he boasts, she was 'as strong as a little donkey. See her out with the sheep-fold, liftin' they great hurdles, and then go out and cut up a bushel o' swedes, and out with it for 'em. Strong as any *man!* That was out here on So-and-So's farm. No mistake, she 'ave worked 'ard.' She has also endured bravely. 'I've knowed my wife', remarked her husband once, 'since we bin married, come 'ome with daglets of ice's big 's yer thumb hangin' from her skirts. Yes, daglets of ice.' (*Can't you hear?* is implied in the old man's impatient repetition.) 'That was trimmin' swedes, with men goin' in front of her to sweep the snow away from 'em. Well, *some* body got to do it; if they didn't, th' sheep 'd starve. So there she bin, with the men sweepin' and she follerin' of 'em, purpose for to keep the sheep goin'. That was in these fields up here'; and Bettesworth points now to Mr. What's-his-name's farm. For the whole neighbourhood has been the scene of old Lucy's labours.

A group of seven or eight old elder-trees grew close to the cottage, their branches bent and hanging with the weight of the purpling clusters.

'What are you going to do with the fruit?' I asked the old woman; and this innocent question raised a tempest in her breast, for I had unwittingly touched on a sore subject.

'Do!' she exclaimed rather fiercely, 'I'm going to do nothing with it! I've made elderberry wine years and years and years. So did my mother; so did my grandmother; so did everybody in *my* time. And very good it were, too, I tell 'e, in cold weather in winter, made hot. It warmed your inside. But nobody wants it now, and nobody'll help me with it. How'm I to do it—keep the birds off and all! I've been fighting 'em years and years and now I can't do it no longer. And what's the good of doing it if the wine's not good enough for people to drink? Nothing's good enough now unless you buys it in a public-house or a shop. It wasn't so when I were a girl. We did everything for ourselves then, and it were better, I tell 'e. We kep' a pig then —so did everyone; and the pork and bacon it were good, not like what we buy now. We put it mostly in brine, and let it be for months; and when we took it out and biled it, it were red as a cherry and white as milk, and it melted just like butter in your mouth. That's what we ate in *my* time. But you can't keep a pig

now—oh dear no! You don't have him more'n a day or two before the sanitary man looks in. He says he were passing and felt a sort of smell about—would you mind letting him come in just to have a sniff round? He expects it might be a pig you've got. In my time we didn't think a pig's smell hurt nobody. They've got their own smell, pigs have, same as dogs and everything else. But we've got very partickler about smells now.

'And we didn't drink no tea then. Eight shillings a pound, or maybe seven-and-six—dear, dear, how was we to buy it! We had beer for breakfast and it did us good. It were better than all these nasty cocoa stuffs we drink now. We didn't buy it at the public-house—we brewed it ourselves. And we had a brick oven then, and could put a pie in, and a loaf, and whatever we wanted, and it were proper vittals. We baked barley bread, and black bread, and all sorts of bread, and it did us good and made us strong. These iron ranges and stoves we have now—what's the good o' they? You can't bake bread in 'em. And the wheat bread you gits from the shop, what's it good for? 'Tisn't proper vittals—it fills 'e with wind. No, I say, I'm not going to git the fruit—let the birds have it! Just look at the greedy things—them starlings! I've shouted, and thrown sticks and all sorts of things, and shaken a cloth at 'em, and it's like calling the fowls to feed. The more noise I make the more they come. What I say is, if I can't have the fruit I wish the blackbirds 'ud git it. People say to me, "Oh, don't talk to me about they

blackbirds—they be the worst of all for fruit.'' But I never minded that—because—well, I'll tell 'e. I mind when I were a little thing at Old Alresford, where I were born, I used to be up at four in the morning, in summer, listening to the blackbirds. And mother she used to say, ''Lord, how she do love to hear a blackbird!'' It's always been the same. I's always up at four, and in summer I goes out to hear the blackbird when it do sing so beautiful. But them starlings that come messing about, pulling the straws out of the thatch, I've no patience with they. We didn't have so many starlings when I were young. But things is very different now; and what I say is, I wish they wasn't—I wish they was the same as when I were a girl. And I wish I was a girl again.'

★23★

The sight of these simple pieces of mechanism—mechanism that supplemented but did not supplant hand labour—makes one think how much fuller and more interesting was the rural home life of the older days, when nearly everything for daily use and daily food was made and produced on the farm or in the immediate district; when people found their joy in life at home, instead of frittering away half their time in looking for it somewhere else; when they honoured their own state of life by making the best of it within its own good limits, instead of tormenting themselves with a

restless striving to be, or at any rate to appear to be, something that they are not. Surely that older life was better and happier and more fruitful, and even, I venture to assume, much fuller of sane and wholesome daily interests. Surely it is more interesting, and the thing when made of a more vital value, when it is made at home from the very beginning, than when it is bought at a shop.

Look at the little silk-winder. Perhaps it belonged, a hundred years ago, to some squire's wife or daughter. She was possibly doing a piece of that pretty old work where a soft narrow silk ribbon is gathered up into little flowers. She wanted some yards of ribbon of a golden colour, something like oat-straw. Nothing of the kind was to be had in the market-town, and she had seen nobody of late likely to be going to London, who could do her commission. So she kept some silk-worms, and when they had done their work she wound off the silken thread from the cocoons on this little winder—a few cocoons at a time bobbing about in a basin of lukewarm water. Then she would wind it off from the dainty hank that had gathered round the pegs of the extended arms, on to the little spools, till she had enough on them to form the threads of the warp and a reserve for the tiny shuttle. And then she had a little loom, home-made—I made one myself once—and wove her golden ribbon.

You may fancy how carefully she used the ribbon; working it in without wasting a quarter of an inch!

★24★

There had been at an earlier period an honesty of purpose surrounding the cottage loom which did not contrive to exist amidst the fouler atmosphere of the factory. What we lost in morality we certainly did not regain by augmented skill. Facilities for increased ingenuity and easier access to markets no doubt demanded the removal of the trade into the towns, but its results were by no means universally beneficial.

★25★

Our father and mother, two sisters and myself, all who were at home, set joyfully and anxiously to work, to do all that we could. We wrote to Peter for a list of the tools he would require; with which, when received, our father went to Dunbar, to Mr. Miller's ironmongery shop, with all the money he could get together, I engaging to go without some new articles of clothing which I was to have had, that there might be the more money. Both of my sisters, after out-field work in the day, went to work with our mother, and got out the linen web of shirting, which the latter annually provided by her own spinning, and, sitting late at night, made a stock of shirts to be sent to Peter; and also worsted stockings. My father sat by the fire, with his glasses on his venerable face, his eyes almost too old to

see to knit stockings, yet persevering, taking several hours from rest at night; after his out-door work, betaking himself to them at every dinner hour, that he might hasten them to a finish; and, as he plied the wires, he would now and again make such observations as these: 'He will surely settle himself now. I will send him a volume of Young's Sermons, in the box with the things; and the *Marrow of Modern Divinity;* it should do him good. . . .'

★26★

It is now several years since I first met Caleb Bawcombe, a shepherd of the South Wiltshire Downs, but already old and infirm and past work. I met him at a distance from his native village, and it was only after I had known him a long time and had spent many afternoons and evenings in his company, listening to his anecdotes of his shepherding days, that I went to see his own old home for myself—the village of Winterbourne Bishop already described, to find it a place after my own heart.

One of his memories was of an old shepherd named John, whose acquaintance he made when a very young man—John being at that time seventy-eight years old —on the Winterbourne Bishop farm, where he had served for an unbroken period of close on sixty years. Though so aged he was still head shepherd, and he continued to hold that place seven years longer—until his

master, who had taken over old John with the place, finally gave up the farm and farming at the same time. He, too, was getting past work and wished to spend his declining years in his native village in an adjoining parish, where he owned some house and cottage property. And now what was to become of the old shepherd, since the new tenant had brought his own men with him?—and he, moreover, considered that John at eighty-five was too old to tend a flock on the hills, even of tegs. His old master, anxious to help him, tried to get him some employment in the village where he wished to stay; and failing in this, he at last offered him a cottage rent free in the village where he was going himself, and, in addition, twelve shillings a week for the rest of his life. It was in those days an exceedingly generous offer, but John refused it. 'Master', he said, 'I be going to stay in my own native village, and if I can't make a living the parish'll have to keep I; but keep or not keep, here I be and here I be going to stay, where I were borned.'

From this position the stubborn old man refused to be moved, and there at Winterbourne Bishop his master had to leave him, although not without having first made him a sufficient provision.

'He would be better off in the infirmary.' That is the word that goes round about many an old man starving on his old-age pension. The easy formula seems to relieve us of responsibility, putting upon the sufferer himself the blame for his discomforts. If he will not take help in the way that it pleases us to give it, whose fault is that but his own?

Yet daily repetition of the saying does not make it a just one, at least in regard to old village people. It may be that for broken-down factory workers, and those who have lived their life in the crowded back-yards of great towns, a work-house infirmary is an acceptable refuge; but worn-out country folk must be unusually wretched before the same thing can be said, truthfully, of them. Their life-history shows why. Although throughout their long years they have worked continually for a profit of which they have been as continually relieved by others, country labourers are still able to carry with them into old age a set of feelings, of tastes, developed in them by the nature of country industry. In the labour-market no one is able to strip away from them that one possession. They are connoisseurs of local handiwork; they know from the inside the meaning and attractiveness of simple outdoor crafts; in the texture of materials—timber, stone, lime, brick-earth, thatching-straw—there is something that goes familiarly home to their senses; and so there is in the shape

of tools, such as they themselves have handled. The fields, the meadows, the woods, the quarries, have never been to them a form of riches, but have always been an interesting theatre for the play of their strength and skill and knowledge; and the intimacies of the village are theirs too—the village where talk has even to-day so much of the folk tinge, and where men's habits are so self-reliant and so little used to inspection and organized routine. This set of tastes, I say, is the one real possession that the exploitation of labour allows old country workers to keep; and though they cannot enjoy it very well on five shillings a week, they are happier in clinging to it with pain than in bidding good-bye to it altogether and going into the infirmary. That is a place they do well to keep outside of as long as they can crawl about.

★28★

Far from his cottage door in peace or strife
He ne'er went fifty miles in all his life.
His knowledge with old notions still combined
Is twenty years behind the march of mind.

Life gave him comfort but denied him wealth,
He toils in quiet but enjoys his health.

He goes to market all the year about
And keeps one hour and never stays it out. . .

He is a simple-worded plain old man
Whose good intents take errors in their plan.

And many a moving tale in antique rhymes
He has for Christmas and such merry times,
When 'Chevy Chase', his masterpiece of song,
Is said so earnest none can think it long . . .
In an old corner cupboard by the wall
His books are laid, though good, in number small,
His Bible first in place; . . .
And prayer-book next, much worn though strongly bound,
Prove him a churchman orthodox and sound.
The *Pilgrim's Progress* and the *Death of Abel*
Are seldom missing from his Sunday table. . .

★29★

Oxton was a hamlet rather than a village. . . . Our grandfather's dwelling, the only one above those of the labourers' sort, was, and is, confessedly, ugly in its aspect. . . . And yet, though there might be little that was picturesque at Oxton, hardly anything, as modern ladies say, to 'sketch,' there was much to enjoy. Each cottage, besides having the needful comforts within had the free air without, and nearly all had a little orchard as well as garden ground behind. The place always had a 'heartsome' look. . . . Violet-picking in

March, and cowslip-gathering when wine-making time was at hand . . . the flower-collecting for her garland to be hung over the house door early on the first day of May . . . garland-making for household adornment, in which on May-day no cottage home was to be found lacking. . . . Another cherished reminiscence of those days was the dance and supper of the haymakers on the last evening of their season's work. The Oxton festivity of this kind was held in a field close by Mrs. Brudenell's cottage, and she supplied the music by drawing a barrel organ which stood in her parlour close to the window that looked into that field, at which she stood turning the handle with unwearied good humour till the dancers were tired and ready for the good supper cheer that followed. Much less was said and written then about the amusements of the people than in our days, but it was a clear part of our mother's remembrances that the labouring poor had lighter spirits than we see in them now, not only that they had more taste for the periodical play that lightens toil, Christmas mumming ('ploughstott' processions as they were called in those parts), and the village 'feasts' at Whitsuntide or mid-summer, but that they were more habitually cheerful in their domestic ways. She often recalled the sight and sound of John Bovill's young family when gathered round the father and mother under the walnut tree, on summer evenings all singing together 'lustily and with a good courage.'

The present inhabitants of the Laurel Country are the direct descendants of the original settlers who were emigrants from England and, I suspect, the lowlands of Scotland. I was able to ascertain with some degree of certainty that the settlement of this particular section began about three or four generations ago, *i.e.* in the latter part of the eighteenth century or early years of the nineteenth. How many years prior to this the original emigration from England had taken place, I am unable to say; but it is fairly safe, I think, to conclude that the present-day residents of this section of the mountains are the descendants of those who left the shores of Britain some time in the eighteenth century.

The region is from its inaccessibility a very secluded one. There are but few roads—most of them little better than mountain tracks—and practically no railroads. Indeed so remote and shut off from outside influence were, until quite recently, these sequestered mountain valleys that the inhabitants have for a hundred years or more been completely isolated and cut off from all traffic with the rest of the world. Their speech is English, not American, and, from the number of expressions they use which have long been obsolete elsewhere, and the old-fashioned way in which they pronounce many of their words, it is clear that they are talking the language of a past day.

Economically they are independent. As there are

practically no available markets, little or no surplus produce is grown, each family extracting from its holding just what is needed to support life, and no more. They have very little money, barter in kind being the customary form of exchange.

Many set the standard of bodily and material comfort perilously low, in order, presumably, that they may have the more leisure and so extract the maximum enjoyment out of life. The majority live in log-cabins, more or less water-tight, usually, but not always lighted with windows; but some have built larger and more comfortable homesteads.

They are a leisurely, cheery people in their quiet way, in whom the social instinct is very highly developed. They dispense hospitality with an open-handed generosity and are extremely interested in and friendly towards strangers, communicative and unsuspicious. 'But surely you will tarry with us for the night?' was said to us on more than one occasion when, after paying an afternoon's visit, we rose to say good-bye.

They know their Bible intimately and subscribe to an austere creed, charged with Calvinism and the unrelenting doctrines of determinism or fatalism.

They have an easy unaffected bearing and the unself-conscious manners of the well-bred. I have received salutations upon introduction or on bidding farewell, dignified and restrained, such as a courtier might make to his Sovereign. Our work naturally led to the making of acquaintances, and, in not a few cases, to the for-

mation of friendships of a more intimate nature, but on no single occasion did we receive anything but courteous and friendly treatment. Strangers that we met in the course of our long walks would usually bow, doff the hat, and extend the hand, saying, 'my name is ——; what is yours?'—an introduction which often led to a pleasant talk and sometimes to singing and the noting of interesting ballads. In their general characteristics they reminded me of the English peasant, with whom my work in England for the last fifteen years or more has brought me into close contact. There are differences, however. The mountaineer is freer in his manner, more alert, and less inarticulate than his British prototype, and bears no trace of the obsequiousness of manner which, since the Enclosure Acts has unhappily robbed him of his economic independence and made of him a hired labourer, has unhappily characterized the English villager. The difference is seen in the way the mountaineer, as I have already said, upon meeting a stranger, removes his hat, offers his hand and enters into conversation, where the English labourer would touch his cap, or pull his forelock, and pass on.

A few of those we met were able to read and write, but the majority of them were illiterate. They are, however, good talkers, using an abundant vocabulary racily and often picturesquely. Although uneducated, in the sense in which that term is usually understood, they possess that elemental wisdom, abundant knowledge and intuitive understanding which only those

who live in constant touch with Nature and face to face with reality seem to be able to acquire.

Physically, they are strong and of good stature, though usually spare in figure. Their features are clean-cut and often handsome; while their complexions testify to wholesome, out-of-door habits. They carry themselves superbly, and it was a never-failing delight to note their swinging, easy gait and the sureness with which they would negotiate the foot-logs over the creeks, the crossing of which caused us so many anxious moments. The children usually go about barefooted, and on occasion their elders too. Like all primitive peoples, or those who live under primitive conditions, they attain to physical maturity at a very early age, especially the women, with whom marriage at thirteen, or even younger, is not unknown.

That the illiterate may nevertheless reach a high level of culture will surprise those only who imagine that education and cultivation are convertible terms. The reason, I take it, why these mountain people, albeit unlettered, have acquired so many of the essentials of culture is partly to be attributed to the large amount of leisure they enjoy, without which, of course, no cultural development is possible, but chiefly to the fact that they have one and all entered at birth into the full enjoyment of their racial heritage. Their language, wisdom, manners and the many graces of life that are theirs, are merely racial attributes which have been gradually acquired and accumulated in past centuries

and handed down generation by generation, each generation adding its quotum to that which it received. It must be remembered, also, that in their everyday lives they are immune from that continuous grinding, mental pressure, due to the attempt to 'make a living', from which nearly all of us in the modern world suffer. Here is no one 'on the make'; commercial competition and social rivalries are unknown. In this respect at any rate they have the advantage over those who habitually spend the greater part of every day in preparing to live, in acquiring the technique of life, rather than in its enjoyment.

I have dwelt at considerable length upon this aspect of the mountain life because it was the first which struck me and further, because, without a realization of this background, it will be difficult for the reader to follow intelligently what I have to say. . . . My sole purpose in visiting this country was to collect the traditional songs and ballads which I had heard were still being sung there. I naturally expected to find conditions very similar to those which I had encountered in England when engaged on the same quest. But of this I was soon to be agreeably disillusioned. Instead, for instance, of having to confine my attention to the aged, as in England, where no one under the age of seventy ordinarily possesses the folk-song tradition, I discovered that I could get what I wanted from pretty nearly every one I met, young and old. In fact, I found myself for the first time in my life in a community in which singing

was as common and almost as universal a practice as speaking. With us, of course, singing is an entertainment, something done by others for our delectation, the cult and close preserve of a professional caste of specialists. The fact has been forgotten that singing is the one form of artistic expression that can be practised without any preliminary study or special training; that every normal human being can sing just as every one can talk; and that it is, consequently, just as ridiculous to restrict the practice of singing to a chosen few as it would be to limit the art of speaking to orators, professors of elocution, and other specialists. In an ideal society every child in his earliest years would as a matter of course develop this inborn capacity and learn to sing the songs of his forefathers in the same natural and unselfconscious way in which he now learns his mother tongue and the elementary literature of the nation to which he belongs.

And it was precisely this ideal state of things that I found existing in the mountain communities. So closely, indeed, is the practice of this particular art interwoven with the ordinary avocations of everyday life that singers, unable to recall a song I had asked for, would often make some such remark as 'Oh, if only I were driving the cows home I could sing it at once!' On one occasion, too, I remember that a small boy tried to edge himself into my cabin in which a man was singing to me and, when I asked him what he wanted, he said, 'I always like to go where there is sweet music.' I let him

in and, later on, when my singer failed to remember a song I had asked for, my little visitor came to the rescue and straightway sang the ballad from beginning to end in the true traditional manner and in a way which would have shamed many a professional vocalist. I have no doubt but that this delightful habit of making beautiful music at all times and in all places largely compensates for any deficiencies in the matter of reading and writing.

★31★

The car ploughed uphill through the long squalid straggle of Tevershall, the blackened brick dwellings, the black slate roofs glistening their sharp edges, the mud black with coal-dust, the pavements wet and black. It was as if dismalness had soaked through and through everything. The utter negation of natural beauty, the utter negation of the gladness of life, the utter absence of the instinct for shapely beauty which every bird and beast has, the utter death of the human intuitive faculty was appalling. The stacks of soap in the grocers' shops, the rhubarb and lemons in the greengrocers! the awful hats in the milliners! all went by ugly, ugly, ugly, followed by the plaster and gilt horror of the cinema with its wet picture announcements, *A Woman's Love*, and the new big Primitive chapel, primitive enough in its stark brick and big panes of greenish and raspberry glass in the windows. The Wesleyan

chapel, higher up, was of blackened brick and stood behind iron railings and blackened shrubs. The Congregational chapel, which thought itself superior, was built of rusticated sandstone and had a steeple, but not a very high one. Just beyond were the new school buildings, expensive pink brick, and gravelled playground inside iron railings, all very imposing, and mixing the suggestion of a chapel and a prison. Standard Five girls were having a singing lesson, just finishing the la-me-doh-la exercises and beginning a 'sweet children's song.' Anything more unlike song, spontaneous song, would be impossible to imagine; a strange bawling yell followed the outlines of a tune. It was not like savages: savages have subtle rhythms. It was not like animals: animals *mean* something when they yell. It was like nothing on earth, and it was called singing. Connie sat and listened with her heart in her boots, as Field was filling petrol. What could possibly become of such a people, a people in whom the living intuitive faculty was dead as nails, and only queer mechanical yells and uncanny will-power remained.

★32★

What is song's eternity?
Come and see.
Can it noise and bustle be?
Come and see.

Praises sung or praises said
Can it be?
Wait awhile and these are dead—
Sigh, sigh;
Be they high or lowly bred
They die.

What is song's eternity?
Come and see.
Melodies of earth and sky,
Here they be.
Song once sung to Adam's ears
Can it be?
Ballads of six thousand years
Thrive, thrive;
Songs awakened with the spheres
Alive.

Mighty songs that miss decay,
What are they?
Crowds and cities pass away
Like a day.
Books are writ and books are read;
What are they?
Years will lay them with the dead—
Sigh, sigh;
Trifles unto nothing wed,
They die.

Dreamers, list the honey-bee;
Mark the tree
Where the bluecap, 'tootle tee,'
Sings a glee
Sung to Adam and to Eve—
Here they be.
When floods covered every bough,
Noah's ark
Heard that ballad singing now;
Hark, hark.

'Tootle tootle tootle tee'—
Can it be
Pride and fame must shadows be?
Come and see—
Every season owns her own;
Bird and bee
Sing creation's music on;
Nature's glee
Is in every mood and tone
Eternity.

The eternity of song
Liveth here;
Nature's universal tongue
Singeth here
Songs I've heard and felt and seen
Everywhere;

Songs like the grass are evergreen:
The giver
Said 'Live and be'—and they have been,
For ever.

★33★

I did not read books the first summer; I hoed beans. Nay, I often did better than this. There were times when I could not afford to sacrifice the bloom of the present moment to any work, whether of the head or hands. I love a broad margin to my life. Sometimes, in a summer morning, having taken my accustomed bath, I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise till noon, rapt in a reverie, amidst the pines and hickories and sumachs, in undisturbed solitude and stillness, while the birds sang around or flitted noiselessly through the house, until by the sun falling in at my west window, or the noise of some traveller's waggon on the distant highway, I was reminded of the lapse of time. I grew in those seasons like corn in the night, and they were far better than any work of the hands would have been. They were not time subtracted from my life, but so much over and above my usual allowance. I realised what the Orientals mean by contemplation and the forsaking of works. For the most part I minded not how the hours went. The day advanced as if to light some work of mine; it was morning and lo! now it is evening,

and nothing memorable is accomplished. Instead of singing like the birds, I silently smiled at my incessant good fortune. As the sparrow had its trill, sitting on the hickory before my door, so had I my chuckle or suppressed warble which he might hear out of my nest. My days were not days of the week, bearing the stamp of any heathen deity, nor were they minced into hours and fretted by the ticking of a clock; for I lived like the Puri Indians, of whom it is said that 'for yesterday, to-day and to-morrow they have only one word, and they express the variety of meaning by pointing backward for yesterday, forward for to-morrow, and overhead for the passing day.' This was sheer idleness to my fellow-townsmen, no doubt; but if the birds and flowers had tried me by their standard, I should not have been found wanting.

★34★

To the westward, adjoining the house, lay the common or fell, which extended some few miles in length, and was of various breadths. It was mostly fine, green sward or pasturage, broken or divided, indeed, with clumps of 'blossom'd whins', foxglove, fern and some junipers, and with heather in profusion, sufficient to scent the whole air. Near the burns, which guttered its sides, were to be seen the remains of old oaks, hollowed out by Time, with alders, willows and birch, which were often to be met with in the same state; and these seemed

to me to point out the length of time that these domains had belonged to no one. On this common—the poor man's heritage for ages past, where he kept a few sheep, or a Kyloe cow, perhaps a flock of geese, and mostly a stock of beehives—it was with infinite pleasure that I long beheld the beautiful wild scenery which was there exhibited, and it is with the opposite feelings of regret that I now find all swept away. Here and there on this common were to be seen the cottage, or rather hovel, of some labouring man, built at his own expense, and mostly with his own hands; and to this he always added a garth and a garden, upon which great pains and labour were bestowed to make both productive; and for this purpose not a bit of manure was suffered to be wasted away on the 'lonnings' or public roads. These various concerns excited the attention and industry of the hardy occupants, which enabled them to prosper, and made them despise being ever numbered with the parish poor. These men, whose children were neither pampered nor spoiled, might truly be called:

'A bold peasantry, their country's pride';

and to this day I think I see their broad shoulders and their hardy sun-burnt looks, which altogether bespoke the vigour of their constitutions.

These cottagers (at least those of them I knew) were of an honest and independent character, while at the same time they held the neighbouring gentry in the

greatest estimation and respect; and these again, in return, did not overlook them, but were interested in knowing that they were happy and well. Most of these poor men, from their having little intercourse with the world, were in all their actions and behaviour truly original; and, except reading the Bible, local histories and old ballads, their knowledge was generally limited. And yet one of these—Will Bewick—from being much struck with my performances, which he called pictures, became exceedingly kind to me, and was the first person from whom I gathered a sort of general knowledge of astronomy and of the magnitude of the universe. He had, the year through, noticed the appearances of the stars and the planets, and would discourse 'largely' on the subject. I think I see him yet, sitting on a mound, or seat, by the hedge of his garden, regardless of the cold, and intent upon viewing the heavenly bodies; pointing to them with his large hands, and eagerly imparting his knowledge to me with a strong voice such as one now seldom hears.

★35★

Sleeping often under the sky, you come to find out for yourself what nobody taught you at school—how Orion is sure to be not there in summer, and Aquila always missing in March, and how the Great Bear, that was straight overhead in the April nights, is wont to

hang low in the north in the autumn. Childish as it may seem to the wise, a few years' nightly view of these and other invariable arrangements may give a simple soul a surprisingly lively twinge of what the ages of faith seem to have meant by the fear of God—the awesome suspicion that there is some sort of fundamental world order or control which cannot by any means be put off or dodged or bribed to help you to break its own laws.

★36★

O God! methinks it were a happy life,
To be no better than a homely swain;
To sit upon a hill, as I do now,
To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,
Thereby to see the minutes how they run,
How many make the hour full complete;
How many hours bring about the day;
How many days will finish up the year;
How many years a mortal man may live.
When this is known, then to divide the times:
So many hours must I tend my flock;
So many hours must I take my rest;
So many hours must I contemplate;
So many hours must I sport myself;
So many days my ewes have been with young;
So many weeks ere the poor fools will ean;
So many years ere I shall shear the fleece:

So minutes, hours, days, months and years,
Pass'd over to the end they were created,
Would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave.
Ah, what a life were this! how sweet! how lovely!
Gives not the hawthorn-bush a sweeter shade
To shepherds looking on their silly sheep,
Than doth a rich embroider'd canopy
To kings that fear their subjects' treachery?

⋆37⋆

When I was a littel girl
The truth to you I tell
I lived with my dear
Frens a tome they
Keap a littel cow and
I cannot tell you
How I in joyed a ron
To fich her home

Yes I lived with my
Dear frens so kind
Then the cow went
Out to grass and
The time so merrely
Past when I went
In the common
Her to find.

My father whent a way
To hes labour all the day
While my mother all her
Work did do a tome and
The puding was so nies
That was mead with
Milk and rice dount you
Think that I had a good home

It was then a good living
They did get and it was
By the seet of ther
Brow my kind frines
I never can fogret
And it was when thy
Keep that littel cow

It was then I lived happy
And free then the
Butter was sent to
Shop and some other
Goods we got the time
Agine I never more
Shall see

Then some pigs they did
Keep to make ther own
Meat and there gardenes
Well stored with corn

They made ther own
Bred with ther own
Grown were twas befor
My young sister was born.

⋆38⋆

And so the women and W. Hewer and I walked upon the Downs, where a flock of sheep was; and the most pleasant and innocent sight that ever I saw in my life. We found a shepherd and his little boy reading, far from any houses or sight of people, the Bible to him; so I made the boy read to me, which he did, with the forced tone that children usually do read, that was mighty pretty, and then I did give him something, and went to the father and talked with him; and I find he had been a servant in my cousin Pepys's house, and told me what was become of their old servants. He did content himself mightily in my liking his boy's reading, and did bless God for him, the most like one of the old patriarchs that ever I saw in my life, and it brought those thoughts of the old age of the world in my mind for two or three days after. We took notice of his woollen knit stockings of two colours mixed, and of his shoes shod with iron, both at the toe and heels, and with great nails in the soles of his feet, which was mighty pretty: and taking notice of them, 'Why', says the poor man, 'The Downs, you see, are full of stones, and

we are fain to shoe ourselves thus; and these', says he, 'will make the stones fly till they ring before me.' I did give the poor man something, for which he was mighty thankful, and I tried to cast stones with his horn crook. He values his dog mightily, that would turn a sheep any way which he would have him, when he goes to fold them: told me there was about eighteen score sheep in his flock, and that he hath four shillings a week the year round for keeping of them: and Mrs. Turner, in the common fields here, did gather one of the prettiest nosegays that ever I saw in my life.

★39★

If there is a look of human eyes that tells of perpetual loneliness, so there is also the familiar look that is the sign of perpetual crowds. It is the London expression, and, in its way, the Paris expression. It is the quickly caught, though not interested look, the dull but ready glance of those who do not know of their forfeited place apart; who have neither the open secret nor the close, neither liberty nor the right of lock and key; no reserve, no need of refuge, no flight nor impulse of flight; no moods but what they may brave out in the street, no hope of news from solitary counsels. Even in many men and women who have all their rights over all their solitudes—solitudes of closed doors and territorial solitudes of sward and forest—even in these who

have enough solitudes to fulfil the wants of a city, even in these is found, not seldom, the look of the street.

★40★

Unfortunately, as the evening was so fine, the roads were full of strollers: groups of three or four men dressed in pale trousers and shiny black cloth coats, following their suspicious little dogs: gangs of youths slouching along, occupied with nothing, often silent, talking now and then in raucous tones on some subject of brief interest: then the gallant husbands, in their tail coats very husbandly, pushing a jingling perambulator, admonished by a much dressed spouse round whom the small members of the family gyrated: occasionally, two lovers walking with a space between them, disowning each other: occasionally, a smartly dressed mother with two little girls in white silk frocks and much expanse of yellow hair, stepping mincingly, and, near by, a father awkwardly controlling his Sunday suit.

★41★

Fortunately, nothing is ever likely to supersede those two splendid cotton materials, corduroy and fustian. The old labourer resting by the roadside is clothed in these. They have the merit that is shared by every

thoroughly good woven stuff, of never looking shabby however much wear they may have had. They may be worn and stained by many a long day's labour, but the man looks well dressed to the last because the stuff and making of his clothes are exactly suited to his life and work. He wears cord trousers, and the sleeved waistcoat that has the front of cord and the sleeves and back of fustian. Such clothing cannot be beaten for comfort and utility, and the farm labourer knows their value.

★42★

He agreed that it was very quiet on the downs, and that he loved their quiet. 'Fifty years', he said, 'I've been on the downs and the fields, day and night, seven days a week, and I've been told that it's a poor way to spend a life, working seven days for ten or twelve, or at most thirteen shillings. But I never seen it like that; I liked it, and I always did my best. You see, sir, I took a pride in it. I never left a place but I was asked to stay. When I left it was because of something I didn't like. I couldn't never abide cruelty to a dog or any beast. And I couldn't abide bad language. If my master swore at the sheep or the dog I wouldn't abide with he—no, not for a pound a week. I liked my work, and I liked knowing things about the sheep. Not things in books, for I never had no books, but what I found out with my own sense, if you can understand me.'

After our long Sunday talk we were silent for a time, and then he uttered these impressive words: 'I don't say that I want to have my life again, because 'twould be sinful. We must take what is sent. But if 'twas offered to me and I was told to choose my work, I'd say, Give me my Wiltsheer Downs again and let me be a shepherd there all my life long.'

★43★

We live in thoughts and feelings, not in days and years,
In feelings, not in figures on a dial,

as some poet has said, and, recalling an afternoon and an evening spent on this heath, it does not seem to my mind like an evening passed alone in a vacant place, in the usual way, watching and listening and thinking of nothing, but an eventful period, which deeply moved me, and left an enduring memory.

The sun went down, and though the distressed birds had cried till they were weary of crying, I did not go away. Something on this occasion kept me, in spite of the gathering gloom and a cold wind—bitterly cold for June—which blew over the wide heath. Here and there the rays from the setting sun fell upon and lit up the few mounds that rise like little islands out of the desolate brown waste. These are the Pixie mounds, the barrows raised by probably prehistoric men, a people

inconceivably remote in time and spirit from us, whose memory is pale in our civilised days.

There are times and moods in which it is revealed to us, or to a few of us, that we are a survival of the past, a dying remnant of a vanished people, and are like strangers and captives among those who do not understand us, and have no wish to do so; whose language and customs and thoughts are not ours. That 'world-strangeness' which William Watson and his fellow-poets prattle in rhyme about, those, at all events, who have what they call the 'note of modernity' in their pipings, is not in me as in them. The blue sky, the brown soil beneath, the grass, the trees, the animals, the wind, and rain, and sun, and stars are never strange to me; for I am in and of and am one with them; and my flesh and the soil are one, and the heat in my blood and in the sunshine are one, and the winds and tempests and my passions are one. I feel the 'strangeness' only with regard to my fellow-men, especially in towns, where they exist in conditions unnatural to me, but congenial to them; where they are seen in numbers and in crowds, in streets and houses, and in all places where they gather together; when I look at them, their pale civilised faces, their clothes, and hear them eagerly talking about things that do not concern me. They are out of my world—the real world. All that they value, and seek and strain after all their lives long, are the merest baubles and childish things; and their ideals are all false, and nothing but by-products, or growths, of

the artificial life—little funguses cultivated in heated cellars.

★44★

It is true, I heard of labouring folk and of their derelict thatched cottages; yet the particulars conceded to me were by no means harrowing. That 'fat of the back' supplied to the harvest men and women for food was not spoken of with disparagement. In terms almost of eulogy another dish furnished to harvest folk was described: a pale pudding with raisins in it, said to have been 'sweet and nice.' 'Bless you', John Smith laughed, ''twasn't so bad as you might think,' this living.

It is likely too that, the commons being still unenclosed, the poor had in fact not quite reached the pitch of destitution that came later. Firing at any rate they could get. Few were so poor but that they could keep a pig. All the labourers kept pigs, I was told. This circumstance in itself fostered some sociability; it was the fashion for each man to go round the village to inspect the pigs as at a cattle show. The labourers could even afford to entertain their friends. When any of them killed a pig, a neighbour might drop in at a meal time and be welcome to a cut off the spare rib. How the forechine was preserved for a special occasion I have already told. No word reached me of unemployment. I got impression of a hard life—a life that had to be content, for instance, with rush-dips o' winter nights

when people like those at the farm were burning tallow candles: but this seemed typical. The differences between labourers and their employers were differences of degree, rather than of kind. They were not humiliating. All folk had the same sort of schooling, the same sort of clothes. In this last respect a curious kind of fashionableness even could be cultivated, to the extent of wearing smock frocks of the correct village colour—for the colours differed in different villages, it has been hinted to me. What need, then—I saw none—to discriminate classes in a population, where the only rich people were the squires and parsons, while a hard though cheerful living was the lot of all others?

★45★

Before he left home for school he may have been a normal child who only craved to be given some bit, any odd bit, of 'real work', as an experience more thrilling than games. Like most children, he may have had a zestful command of fresh, vivid, personal speech, his choice of words expressing simply and gaily the individual working of his mind and his joy in its work. Through easy contact with gardeners, gamekeepers and village boys he often had established a quite natural, unconscious friendliness with people of different social grades. He was probably born of the kind that pries young, that ask, when they play on sea sands, why there

are tides, and what goes on in the sky that there should be rain. And then down came the shades of the prison-house. To make this large, gay book of fairy tales, the earth, dull and stale to a child importunately fingering at its covers might seem a task to daunt the strongest. But many of the teachers of our youth are indomitable men. They can make earth's most ardent small lover learn from a book what a bore his dear earth can be, with her strings of names of towns, rivers and lakes, her mileages *à faire mourir*, and her insufferable tale of flax and jute. With an equal firmness your early power of supple and bright-coloured speech may be taken away and a rag-bag of feeble stock phrases, misfits for all your thoughts, and worn dull and dirty by everyone else, be forced upon you instead of the treasure you had. You may leave school unable to tell what stars are about you at night or to ask your way to a journey's end in any country but your own. Between your helpless mind and most of your fellow-countrymen thick screens of divisions are drawn, so that when you are fifteen you do not know how to speak to them with a natural courtesy; you have a vague idea that they will steal your watch if you leave it about.

★46★

The distinctions of society have grown with our commercial wealth and have multiplied grades and rela-

tions. A sense of independence too has sprung up in the lower classes, with commerce and the growth of intelligence. The great man might, indeed, condescend to call his tenants and dependents to his hall to a Christmas revel, but if they went at all they would go reluctantly, and feel ill at ease. They would feel it as a condescension, and not as springing out of the heartiness of old customs. They would feel that they were out of their element; for all classes know instinctively the broad differences of habits, manners and modes of thinking that separate them from each other more effectually than any feudal institutions did their ancestors. The pride of the yeoman would be more in danger of suffering than the pride of the lord; the pride of the cottager than that of the farmer, if invited to his table. When the brick floor and the wooden bench gave way in the farm-house to the carpet and the mahogany chair, the feet of the labourer ceased to tread familiarly round the farmer's table. Harvest meals and harvest-home suppers bring them together in rustic districts; they are the remaining links of the old chain of society; but the Christmas custom is broken, and is therefore no longer observable with full content.

⋆47⋆

Soon after my arrival in Edinburgh I went with some relatives to the theatre. The Christmas pantomime was

still played, and that season it was *Mother Goose*. I thought it funny, clever, wonderful. But the pantomime had less charm for me than the house, especially the chandelier. I had seen nothing of lamp kind brighter than my mother's oil lamp at Thriepland Hill, until I saw the rows of gas lights in the Edinburgh streets; and now it seemed as if all their brightness had been concentrated within the theatre. But on the next occasion (the only other occasion, I believe, of my going to the theatre during that residence in Edinburgh) I saw *Rob Roy*. The Rob Roy of Pritchard, the matchless Bailie Nicol Jarvie of Mackay, the Diana Vernon of Miss Noel, the Major Galbraith of Murray (the manager, who for many years has been celebrated for having the best dramatic company out of London); all these might have afforded a theatrical treat to old playgoers; what, therefore, must this have been to me? I loved music, but had never heard a female voice so good as bare mediocrity. When Miss Noel, with her powerful and rich voice, opened out with the song, 'A Highland lad my love was born', the electric effect was as great upon me as if heaven had opened, and a singing angel had descended. Horncastle was the musical Osbaldeston, and began, if I mistake not, with 'O my love is like a red red rose!' I had heard some good male singers, as precentors in the churches; but none had a voice like him. The memory of that delightful entertainment served me to think upon, and refresh my spirit with, as I toiled in the saw-pit at the long saw for weeks after.

I have talked with scores of old country people on this subject of folk-singing. They all repeat the same tale. Everyone sang in their young days, they will tell you; they went to their work in the mornings singing; they sang in the fields, and they trudged home in the evenings to the accompaniment of song. Talk to any old peasant and you will find that he has an intimate acquaintanceship with the old songs. Maybe, he will confess that he himself was 'never no zinger', but he will volunteer to 'tell' you a song, and own to the ability to join in when others are there to give him a lead. The evidence is overwhelming that, as recently as thirty or forty years ago, every country village in England was a nest of singing-birds. . . .

The folk-singers of to-day, as I have already remarked, are the last of a long line that stretches back into the mists of far-off days. Their children were the first of their race to reject the songs of their forefathers. Nowadays, the younger generations despise them, and, when they mention them, it is with a lofty and supercilious air and to pour ridicule upon them. The old singers, of course, hold the modern song in like contempt, although they accept the changed conditions with a quiet dignity, which is not without its pathos. One old singer once said to me, 'Our tunes be out o' vashion. They young volk come a-zingin' thicky comic songs, and I don't know they, and they won't

hearken to my old-vashioned zongs.' The old order changeth, and the old singers realize that their day has gone and that they and their songs are 'out o' vashion'.

Attention must be drawn to the conventional method of singing adopted by folk-singers. During the performance the eyes are closed, the head upraised, and a rigid expression of countenance maintained until the song is finished. A short pause follows the conclusion, and then the singer relaxes his attitude and repeats in his ordinary voice the last line of the song, or its title. This is the invariable ritual on formal occasions. It does not proceed from any lack of appreciation. The English peasant is by nature a shy man and undemonstrative, and on ceremonious occasions, as when he is singing before his audience, he becomes very nervous and restrained, and welcomes the shelter afforded by convention. I have never seen women sing in this way; but then they never perform in public, and only very rarely when men are present. If you would prevail upon a married woman to sing to you, you must call upon her when her man is away at work, that is, if he be a singer himself. She will never sing to you in his presence until you have come to know both her and her husband very intimately.

A man will sing naturally enough, and without any formality, by his own fireside. I have known him, on such occasions, to get quite excited when he is singing a song that moves him, and to rise from his chair and gesticulate and, perhaps, beat the table to enforce the

rhythm of the tune. One old woman once sang to me out in the open fields, where she was working, and between the verses of her song she seized the lapel of my coat, and looked up into my face with glistening eyes to say, 'Isn't it beautiful?'

Singers have often said to me, 'When I were young I used to dance thicky zong, but I be too old now'—an interesting survival of the days before the sister arts of singing and dancing were divorced. 'The Keys of Heaven' is a song that often used to be danced and sung with dramatic action by a man and his wife.

The repertoires of many of the old singers are very extensive. . . . The old singers were proud, too, of the large numbers of songs that they could sing. To prove their prowess they would often arrange singing matches, which would last for several evenings. Each night the competitors would meet and sing songs alternately, until one of them had exhausted his repertoire; when the loser paid for his defeat in being mulcted in the cost of all the refreshments that had been consumed during the contest. The unsuccessful competitor has often told me that the day after his discomfiture several songs came back to his mind, which, if he had remembered at the time, might have reversed the verdict. This, I have no doubt, is true enough; you never know when you have got to the bottom of a singer's memory.

The quality of the voice of the average folk-singer is, of course, thin and poor, but that is because he is an old man. You cannot expect a man of eighty years of

age, or upward, to sing with the resonant voice of youth; the wonder is that he can sing at all. The folk-singer is, however, no mean vocalist. He is a past-master in the art of welding together words and tune, *i.e.* in enunciating his syllables with great clearness, while maintaining an unbroken stream of melody. He sings, too, as a rule, with very pure intonation, except when the compass of a song is so wide that he is driven on to the extreme notes of his voice. I have already said that many singers take the natural seventh, especially in mixolydian tunes, and the natural third, instead of the corresponding tempered intervals. Folk-singers have, no doubt, acquired their vocal skill from constantly singing without accompaniment. The unevenness of tone, which mars the vocalization of all but the very best of singers, is directly attributable to the practice of singing habitually with instrumental accompaniment. . . .

A few weeks ago I was hunting for songs on Exmoor, and had spent two or three hours one afternoon listening to and noting down several exquisite melodies that were sung to me by an old man, eighty-six years of age. In the evening of the same day, my peace was rudely disturbed by the raucous notes of coarse music-hall songs, shouted out, at the tops of their voices, by the young men of the village, who were spending the evening in the bar of my hotel. The contrast between the old-fashioned songs and kindly manners of my friend the old parish clerk, who lived hard by, and the songs

and uncouth behaviour of the present occupants of the bar, struck me very forcibly, and threw into strong relief the deplorable deterioration that, in the last thirty years or so, has taken place in the manners and amusements of the country villagers.

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The people went on making and singing their own songs, unaffected by the growth of art-music amongst the cultivated. Thus, we find, even at the present day, the two streams of art-music and folk-music flowing side by side. In the country, where nowadays the unlettered classes alone survive, the common people still preserve their own music, just as they have kept their own speech. The history of music and of language has been very much the same. Literature has been built upon the speech of the common people, as art-music has been founded upon their music. Peasant music is genuine music; peasant speech is genuine language; neither peasant music nor peasant speech is a corrupt form of the music or of the speech of cultivated people.

★ ★ ★

Folk-songs and folk-dances, in days gone by, played an important part in the social life of the English village. That life is now waning, and with it are passing away the old traditions and customs. It is, happily, still possible, here and there, and in out-of-the-way nooks and corners, to come upon peasant men and women

old enough to remember the village life of sixty, seventy, or even eighty years ago; and they will sing to you the songs and explain to you the dances that, in their young days, and on summer evenings, were sung and danced on the village greens. The English peasant still exists, although the peasantry, as a class, is extinct. Reformers would dispel the gloom which has settled upon the countryside, and revive the social life of the villages. Do what they will, however, it will not be the old life that they will restore. That has gone past recall. It will be of a new order, and one that will bear but little resemblance to the old social life of the 'Merrie England' of history.

Already many of the old singers, from whom three or four years ago I recovered songs, are dead and gone; and, of the rest, few will be able to 'tune a zong' many years hence. Mr. Baring-Gould tells me that, without a single exception, all his old singers have gone to their long rest. The seventy-nine songs in *Folk Songs from Somerset* were contributed by thirty-eight singers, whose ages average over seventy years apiece. In less than a decade, therefore, English folk-singing will be extinct. . . .

It appears, then, that the last generation of folk-singers must have been born not later than sixty or seventy years ago—say 1840. Why the chain of tradition snapped, and without warning, at that particular link, it is difficult to say. Some would attribute it to the invention of railways, to the spread of education,

to the industrial revival, or even to the political unrest which followed the passing of the Reform Bill and the repeal of the corn laws.

★ ★ ★

Attention must be drawn to one extremely important characteristic of the folk-singer. It is a well-known fact that the folk-singer attaches far more importance to the words of his song than to its tune; that, while he is conscious of the words that he is singing, he is more or less unconscious of the melody. I have come across many peasant singers who were unable to recognize a tune, or at any rate to distinguish one tune from another. . . . The inability of the average singer to hum an air without its words provides further proof of the peculiarity under discussion. . . . Fiddlers, too, associate the tune with the dance in precisely the same way as singers connect the air of a song with its words. I have often heard them say that if only they could recall the dance they would remember the tune also. They seem quite incapable of playing a tune if they have forgotten the form and figures of the dance to which it belongs. On one occasion, a concertina player, from whom I had just noted down a Morris tune, innocently remarked, 'Now, sir, you know all about the dance.' On cross-examination I discovered that he really believed that a knowledge of the tune carried with it the knowledge of the figures of the dance also.

On Sunday morning early, we saw a crowd going up the street, and immediately perceived that in the centre of it, were the Sussex cricketers, just arrived by the London coach, and going to an inn kept by one of the Nottingham cricketers. They looked exceedingly interesting, being a very fine set of fellows, in their white hats and with all their trunks, carpet-bags and cloaks, coming, as we verily believed, to be beaten. Our interest was strongly excited; and on Monday morning we set off to the cricket-ground, which lies about a mile from the town, in the Forest, as it is still called, though not a tree is left upon it—a long, furzy common, crowned at the top by about twenty windmills, and descending in a steep slope to a fine level, round which the race-course runs. Within the race-course lies the cricket-ground, which was enclosed at each end with booths; and all up the forest hill were scattered booths, and tents with flags flying, fires burning, pots boiling, ale-barrels standing, and asses, carts and people bringing still more good things. There were plenty of apple and ginger-beer stalls; and lads going round with nuts and with waggish looks, crying: 'nuts, lads! nuts, lads!' In little hollows the nine-pin and will-peg men had fixed themselves to occupy loiterers; and, in short, there was all the appearance of a fair.

Standing on the farther side of the cricket ground, it gave me the most vivid idea possible, of an amphi-

theatre filled with people. In fact, it was an amphitheatre. Along each side of the ground ran a bank sloping down to it, and it, and the booths and tents at the ends were occupied with a dense mass of people, all as silent as the ground beneath them; and all up the hill were groups, and on the race-stand an eager, forward-leaning throng. There were said to be twenty thousand people, all hushed as death, except when some exploit of the players produced a thunder of applause. The playing was beautiful. Mr. Ward, late member of parliament for London, a great cricket player, came from the Isle of Wight to see the game, and declared himself highly delighted. But nothing was so beautiful as the sudden shout, the rush and breaking up of the crowd when the last decisive match was gained. To see the scorers suddenly snatch up their chairs, and run off with them towards the players' tent; to see the bat of Bart Goode, the batsman on whom the fate of the game depended, spinning up in the air, where he had sent it in the ecstasy of the moment; and the crowd, that the instant before was fixed and silent as the world itself, spreading all over the green space where the white figures of the players had till then been so gravely and apparently calmly contending—spreading with a murmur as of the sea; and over their heads, amid the deafening clamour and confusion, the carrier-pigeon with a red ribbon tied to its tail, the signal of loss, beating round and round as to ascertain its precise position, and then flying off to bear the tidings to

Brighton—it was a beautiful sight, and one that the most sedate person must have delighted to see.

★ 50 ★

Roaming the little path 'neath dotterel trees
Of some old hedge or spinney side, I've oft
Been startled pleasantly from musing ways
By frighted doves that suddenly aloft
Spring through the many boughs with chittering noise;
Till, free from such restraints, above the head
They smacked their clapping wings for very joys;
And in a curious mood I've oft been led
To climb the twig-surrounded trunk, and there
On some few bits of sticks two white eggs lie,
As left by accident all lorn and bare,
Almost without a nest; yet by and by
Two birds in golden down will leave the shells
And hiss and snap at wind-blown leaves that shake
Around their home where green seclusion dwells;
Till fledged, and then the young adventurers take
The old ones timid flights from oak to oak,
Listening the pleasant sutherings of the shade,
Nor startled by the woodman's hollow stroke;
Till autumn's pleasant visions pine and fade,
Then they in bolder crowds will sweep and fly
And brave the desert of a winter sky.

Little have we had of the smell of rain, little of the loaded heads of trees and flowers, or of the scattered scent of a windy pine. Where the trees and flowers stood there they breathed.

All round the cloudy heads of meadow-sweet hung an outer and invisible cloud of their innocent odours. Limes enclosed their own sequestered air, and there were caves of antique sweetness accumulated within the box-hedges of a garden that had lost its boundaries and the shape of its flower-beds, at the head of a Sussex village street over against the distant downs that look on the further sea. Raspberries, astray from what was once their place, ripened at random in all the hedges, and the air stood still round their increasing fragrance. The ashes of the privet burnt out, were yet sweet, undisturbed; and the roots of the grass smelt as dry as its flowers that were cut down in June, when they had swept a month of breezes with their cool colours, and are now hayricks in the farms. Flashes of inaudible storms suddenly showed us the hills at night and the edges of a cloud, but the steep village, with its tiled cottages, red amid poppies, was still soft in dust and drought.

The house, too, that gave me shelter must be spoken of; for never have I known any human habitation, in a land where people are discovered dwelling in so many secret, green, out-of-the-world places, which had so much of nature in and about it. Grown-up and young people were in it, and children too, but they were girls, and had always quite spontaneously practised which I had preached—pet nothing and persecute nothing. There was no boy to disturb the wild creatures with his hunting instincts and loud noises; no dog, no cat, nor any domestic creature except the placid cows and fowls which supplied the household with milk and eggs. A small old picturesque red-brick house with high-pitched roof and tall chimneys, a great part of it overrun with ivy and creepers, the walls and tiled roof stained by time and many-coloured lichen to a richly variegated greyish red. The date of the house, cut in a stone tablet in one of the rooms, was 1692. In front there was no lawn, but a walled plot of ground with old, once ornamental trees and bushes symmetrically placed—yews, both spreading and cypress-shaped Irish yew, and tall tapering juniper, and arbor vitae; it was a sort of formal garden which had long thrown off its formality. In a corner of the ground by the side of these dark plants were laurel, syringa, and lilac bushes, and among these such wildings as thorn, elder and bramble had grown up, flourishing greatly, and making of that

flowery spot a tangled thicket. At the side of the house there was another plot of ground, grass-grown, which had once been the orchard, and still had a few ancient apple and pear trees, nearly past bearing, with good nesting holes for the tits and starlings in their decayed mossy trunks. There were also a few old ivied shade-trees—chestnuts, fir and evergreen oak.

Best of all (for the birds) were the small old half-ruined outhouses which had remained from the distant days when the place, originally a manor, had been turned into a farm-house. They were here and there, scattered about, outside the enclosure, ivy-grown, each looking as old and weather-stained and in harmony with its surroundings as the house itself—the small tumble-down barns, the cow-sheds, the pig-house, the granary with open door and the wooden staircase falling to pieces. All was surrounded by old oak woods, and the river was close by. . . .

At the riverside, a few hundred yards from the house, I was sitting in the shade of a large elm tree one day when I was visited by a big hornet, who swept noisily down and settled on the trunk, four or five feet above the ground. A quantity of sap had oozed out into a deep cleft of the rough bark and had congealed there, and the hornet had discovered it. Before he had been long feeding on it I saw a little bank-vole come out from the roots of the tree and run up the trunk, looking very pretty in his bright chestnut fur as he came into the sunlight. Stealing up to the lower end of the

cleft full of thickened sap he too began feeding on it. The hornet, who was at the upper end of the cleft, quite four inches from the vole, at once stopped eating and regarded the intruder for some time, then advanced towards him in a threatening attitude. The vole was frightened at this, starting and erecting his hair, and once or twice he tried to recover his courage and resume his feeding, but the hornet still keeping up his hostile movements, he eventually slipped quietly down and hid himself at the roots. When the hornet departed he came out again and went to the sap.

Wishing to see more, I spent most of that day and the day following at the spot, and saw hornet and vole meet many times. If the vole was at the sap when the hornet came he was at once driven off, and when the hornet was there first the vole was never allowed to feed, although on every occasion he tried to do so, stealing to his lower place in the gentlest way in order not to give offence, and after beginning to feed affecting not to see that the other had left off eating, and with raised head was regarding him with jealous eyes.

★53★

From above the pool looked like any little innocent sheet of water. But down in the hollow itself it grew sinister. The villagers used to say and to believe that it had no bottom, and certainly a very great depth in it

could be *felt*, if not accurately gauged, as one stood at the water's edge. A long time ago it was a great limestone quarry, but to-day the large mounds of rubble on one side of it are covered with grass and planted with mazzard trees, grown to quite a large girth. On the other side one is confronted by a tall sheet of black, carboniferous rock, rising sheer out of the inky water—a bare, sombre surface on which no mosses even—'tender creatures of pity,' Ruskin calls them—have taken compassion by softening the jagged edges of the strata or nestling in the scars. It is an example of 'contortion', as geologists say, for the beds are bent into a quite regular geometrical pattern—syncline and anticline in waves—by a deep-seated plutonic force that makes the mind quake in the effort to imagine it.

On the top of this rock, and overhanging the water, a gaunt, haggard-looking fir tree impends, as it seems, in a perilous balance; while down below, the pool—sleek and shiny—quietly waits with cat-like patience.

In summer time, successive rows of foxgloves, one behind the other, in barbaric splendour, are ranged around the grassy rubble slopes like spectators in an amphitheatre, waiting the spectacle. Fire-bellied efts slip here and there lazily through the water. Occasionally a grass-snake would swim across the pool, and once I caught one and, on opening his stomach, found a large fire-bellied eft inside. The sun beats fiercely into this deep hollow and makes the water tepid. On the surface grows a hairy alga, which was once all green,

but now festers in yellow patches and causes a horrible stench. Everything is absolutely still—air and water are stagnant. A large *Dytiscus* beetle rises to the surface to breathe, and every now and then large bubbles of marsh gas come sailing majestically up from the depth and explode quietly into the fetid air. The *horrificness* of this place impressed me even when I was intent only on fishing there for bugs and efts. Now, seen in retrospect, it haunts me.

★54★

The insect was flying rather slowly by me over the heath—a thin, yellow-bodied, long-legged creature, a *Tipula*, about half as big as our familiar crane-fly. Now, as it flew by me about on a level with my thighs, up from the heath at my feet shot out a second insect, about the same size as the first, also a *Dipteron*, but of another family—one of the *Asilidae*, which are rapacious. The *Asilus* was also very long-legged, and seizing the other with its legs, the two fell together to the ground. Stooping down, I witnessed the struggle. They were locked together, and I saw the attacking insect raise his head and the forepart of his body so as to strike, then plunge his rostrum like a dagger in the soft part of his victim's body. Again and again he raised and buried his weapon in the other, and the other still refused to die or to cease struggling. And this little fight and struggle of two flies curiously moved me, and for

some time I could not get over the feeling of intense repugnance it excited. This feeling was wholly due to association: the dagger-like weapon and the action of the insect were curiously human-like, and I had seen just such a combat between two men, one fallen and the other on him, raising and striking down with his knife. Had I never witnessed such an incident, the two flies struggling, one killing the other, would have produced no such feeling, and would not have been remembered.

★55★

Tarka and Greymuzzle swam with the swan to the shore, where they bit into the throat and closed their eyes as they drank its hot blood. Soon mouthfuls of feathers were being torn away, but before they could eat its flesh Fang-over-lip crept upon them. He, too, was famished, having eaten only a mouse that night—and that small biter of willow bark was but fur and bone. With the boldness of starvation the fox rushed upon them. The snarling brought a boar badger, who had been digging for the roots of sea-beet in the crevices of the stones of the sea-wall. The boar lumbered down the slope, over the seaweed and across the shingle to where Fang-over-lip, with fluffed-out brush and humped back, was threatening the otters. The badger, who was called Bloody Bill Brock by certain badger-digging publicans, had never before been so hungry.

For two days the walls of his belly had been flat. He had no fear of any animal. The otters bit his hide, but could not hurt him, as under the long grey tapered hairs his skin was nearly half an inch thick. Pushing them away and grunting he seized the swan in his jaws and dragged it away. . . .

Greymuzzle returned to the duckpond with only seaweed and shellfish to nourish herself and her cub. Unsteadily it dragged its little body towards her, and opened its mouth to greet her. No sound came from its mouth. Its legs trembled and could not carry its head, which hung over the couch of reeds. Its paws were frost-bitten, its eye-sockets empty. Greymuzzle stared at it, before lying down and giving the shelter of her body. She spoke to it and took it in her paws and licked its face, which was her only way of telling her love. The cub tottered away, and sought the milk which it could not find. Afterwards it slept, until she left again to seek food in the wide daylight, following the slot of deer across the snow. The hind, which had come down from the high ground with a herd and wandered away with her calf that had been with her since its birth the previous May, caught the scent of the otter and ran away, the calf beside her. The otter followed, but turned away when she saw a small bird crouching on the snow, unable to fly further. She ate the fire-crested wren—a thimbleful of skin, bone and feather. After a vain prowl round the garden of the marsh-man, she returned to the duckpond, crossing the pill three hun-

dred yards below the place where men were breaking up, for firewood, the hulk of an old dismasted ketch. In the field she picked up the skull of a sheep and carried it a few yards before dropping it. She had picked it up and dropped it many times already.

★56★

There was a friend, Alick F—, whom I met, for the first time, about this period, and with whom I soon formed an intimacy of the most agreeable kind, who gave me some new ideas about the killing of birds and beasts. He was no more than a stonemason, working for weekly wages, but he was a reader, and also a thinker. He said there was something excessively mean in snaring a hare, not only as regarded any supposed owner of the hare, but as regarded the hare itself. It was mean to put down a snare and catch it in the dark. It was below the dignity of civilised men. He ridiculed the delight which people took in shooting. I was with him one wintry day on the sea shore. It was a rocky shore; the headlands, of which St. Abb's is one, rise in majestic grandeur against the storms of the northern ocean, which ride a thousand miles on waves so high that they come as if they would go over St. Abb's. We were on the shore of a bay six miles westward, and had a wide view of the grand scenery of the storm. We became philosophic and almost poetic in our conversa-

tion. He was quarrying stones in a sheltered nook, and I had taken my gun, because it was a stormy day, to have a shot at the sea-birds, which could be more easily reached in tempestuous weather than at other times. Thus we met. In the midst of our geological speculations as to the time when, and the circumstances under which the stratum of rock was formed which he had wedged asunder, and just as we had admired the magnificence of a wave which seemed in itself to be a sea risen on end to overwhelm the land, I saw a redshank on the wing, which I thought was within shot, and snatched up the gun to shoot it. He stopped me on the instant, and said 'Let it go! What if the hand which has more power over that ocean and these waves than you have over that gun and the shot within it, were to have as little mercy for living things? What, if you and I were redshanks or that all this nation was as but one redshank, and the author of this storm which permits that redshank to live which you would have killed, should have lifted his arm against us?'. . .

His personal society had this farther charm, that he was the brother of a certain personage who had for some months occupied the largest space in my thoughts. . . . It was at this time that I made the acquaintance of her brothers; first, the one alluded to, then a second, third, fourth and fifth. They were occasionally at work near to where I was employed, and we became intimate. They were all of them men above the average rate of intelligence, and many pleasant hours I had with

them, conversing about books, sometimes buying books together, and frequently borrowing and lending them to read.

★ 57 ★

The grass of this headland is usually covered with feathers. There are not so many now in winter as during the autumn moult, but there is no lack. Some are unstained white, some slaty-grey or black, these from the full-grown birds, but the majority are from the yearlings, mottled brown and white. These markings are remarkable, as though the sea with all its moods was photographed upon them. On the smooth under-vane there are ribbed markings, exactly similar to those left on sand that has been lately washed by the waves. This tiny picture conjures in the imagination the water-washed or wind-etched borders of continents. Near to the shaft on the upper vane is the streaked calm of evening, reflected in the sea's mirror. And here, on the broader flange of the feather, there is a sky, swirling with waves or tempest in high tumult. At a little distance there is a cascade of waves over rocks, and here again the sand, fresh washed by the retreating tide. These pictures have in truth been painted by the very sea itself; for since the nestling gull hatched from the egg on its ledge of rock, it has been always in the presence of sea and sky. Inevitably they have left their mark. They are here in miniature on this feather, for me to

stick in my button-hole, and to carry away with me to remind me of the sea's moods, which people who live inland often forget.

★58★

The wind, indeed, seemed to be made for the scene, as the scene seemed made for the hour. Part of its tone was quite special; what was heard there could be heard nowhere else. Gusts in innumerable series followed each other from the north-west, and when each one of them raced past the sound of its progress resolved into three. Treble, tenor and bass notes were to be found therein. The general ricochet of the whole over pits and prominences had the gravest pitch of the chime. Next there could be heard the baritone buzz of a holly tree. Below these in force, above them in pitch, a dwindled voice strove hard at a husky tune, which was the peculiar local sound alluded to. Thinner and less immediately traceable than the other two, it was far more impressive than either. In it lay what may be called the linguistic peculiarity of the heath; and being audible nowhere on earth off a heath, it afforded a shadow of reason for the woman's tenseness, which continued unbroken as ever

Throughout the blowing of these plaintive November winds that note bore a great resemblance to the ruins of human song which remain to the throat of fourscore and ten. It was a worn whisper, dry and

papery, and it brushed so distinctly across the ear that, by the accustomed, the material minutiae in which it originated could be realised as by touch. It was the united products of infinitesimal vegetable causes, and these were neither stems, leaves, fruit, blades, prickles, lichen, nor moss.

They were the mummied heath-bells of the past summer, originally tender and purple, now washed colourless by Michaelmas rains, and dried to dead skins by October suns. So low was an individual sound from these that a combination of hundreds only just emerged from silence, and the myriads of the whole declivity reached the woman's ear but as a shrivelled and intermittent recitative. Yet scarcely a single accent among the many afloat to-night could have such power to impress a listener with thoughts of its origin. One inwardly saw the infinity of those combined multitudes; and perceived that each of the tiny trumpets was seized on, entered, scoured and emerged from by the wind as thoroughly as if it were as vast as a crater.

'The spirit moved them.' A meaning of the phrase forced itself upon the attention; and an emotional listener's fetichistic mood might have ended in one of more advanced quality. It was not, after all, that the left-hand expanse of old blooms spoke, or the right-hand, or those of the slope in front; but it was the single person of something else speaking through each in turn.

I must confess that, to me, this cold Calvinism, this abusive and declamatory zeal, though coming from very gentlemanly mouths, is not a thousandth part so attractive as the warm-hearted, liberal, and affectionate addresses of the illiterate mechanic. Nay, to me it is excessively repulsive; and I would much rather find myself in some far-off village, in some green lane, or on the heath, where such are holding their summer camp-meeting. There at least, are warmth and enthusiasm; there at least, if there be extravagance, is also an exhibition of much character, and plenty of the picturesque. A crowd of rustic people is assembled; a wagon is drawn thither for a stage, and in it stand men with black skull-caps, or coloured handkerchiefs tied upon their heads to prevent taking cold after their violent exertions; men of those grave and massy, or thin, worn and sharp features, that tell of strong, rude intellects, or active and consuming spirits; men, in whose bright, quick eyes, or still, deep gaze, from beneath shaggy brows, you read passions that will lighten, or a shrewdness that will tell with strong effect. In their addresses you are continually catching the most picturesque expressions, the most unlooked-for illustrations—often the most irresistibly amusing. I heard one edifying his audience with an account of the apples of the Dead Sea, gathered most likely, at a tenth transmission, from Adam Clarke's Commentaries. 'Ay',

said he, 'sin is fair to look at, but foul to taste. It is like those apples that grow by the *Red* Sea. They are yellow as gold on one side, and rosy-cheeked as a fair maid of a morning on the other; but bite them—yes, I say bite them, and they are full of pepper and mustard.'

Another was talking of God's goodness, and applying Christ's illustration; ' "If you ask your father for bread, will he give you a stone?" Now, my brethren, I don't mean a stone of bread—Christ didn't mean a stone of bread; for, may be, it was not sold by the stone in his time; and he would not be a bad father neither, that gave you a stone of bread at a time; but I mean a stone from the road—a real pebble, as cold as charity, as bare as the back of my hand, and as hard as the heart of a sinner.'

Now, none but those who had known the immense value of a stone of bread, would be likely to think of such a thing, or to guard against such a mistake. But with such laughable errors, with much ignorance and outrageous cant, there is often mixed up a rude intellectual strength, and a freshness of thought that never knew the process of taming and trammelling called education, and that fears no criticism; and flashes of poetical light, that please the more for the rudeness of their accompaniment. There are women, too, that exhort in soft voices and pathetic tones on such occasions; and suddenly the crowd will divide itself into several companies, and go singing to different parts of the field. . . . I well remember, in the dusk of a fine

summer evening, the moon hanging in the far western sky, the dark leaves of the brook-side alders rustling in the twilight air, bearing, from the dim heath where they were holding their camp-meetings, the wild sound of one of these hymns. It was the dialogue of a spirit questioning and answering itself in the passage of death, and the entrance into the happy land, and the chorused words of "All is well!—All is well!" came over the shadowy waste with an unearthly effect.

* 60 *

Perhaps a heavy buzzard may rise, flapping, from its nest on the moor, or pounce from a crag in the direction of any water-birds that may be about the springs and pools in the hills. There is no other sound, unless it be the hum of the gnats in the hot sunshine. There is an aged man in the district, however, who hears more than this, and sees more than people below would, perhaps, imagine. An old shepherd has the charge of four rain gauges which are set up on four ridges—desolate, misty spots, sometimes below and often above the clouds. He visits each once a month and notes down what these gauges record; and when the tall old man, with his staff, passes out of sight into the cloud, or among the cresting rocks, it is a striking thought that science has set up a tabernacle in these wildernesses and found a priest among the shepherds. That old man

has seen and heard wonderful things—has trod upon rainbows, and been waited upon by a dim retinue of spectral mists. He has seen the hail and the lightnings go forth as from under his hand, and has stood in the sunshine, listening to the thunder growling, and the tempest bursting beneath his feet. He well knows the silence of the hills, and all the solemn ways in which that silence is broken. The stranger, however, coming hither on a calm sunny day may well fancy that a silence like this can never be broken.

★61★

Though I were stricken with blindness I would still go to the mountains. I would lie on the turf of a quiet alp in the morning, when the dew is drying and the light breezes are fragrant with flowers and moist earth. I would breathe long breaths of pine-scented airs. I would hearken to the lazy jangle of cow-bells from distant pastures, the boom of glacier torrents and the solemn roll of avalanches. And maybe the 'Lordly Folk who dwell in the Hollow Hills' would take pity on me: I would hear their friendly chuckle in the near-by stream, their elfin whispers in the grass, and their murmured chorus in the pine-tops.

Or I would ask to be led to some high hut, and, lying on its straw-filled bunks, listen to the deep voice of the night-wind, and in the early morning open the door

and going forth meet the keen dawn-breath with its indefinable promise of delight.

Or possibly I would be content with the homeland hills, and sitting on a windy edge inhale deeply the salt tang of the sea, or spend a day on a soft couch of heather in some silent cwm or glen, and share the confidences of the small hill-stream on its journey to the sea.

. . . Men find religion in different ways, and some on a mountain. The religion of the mountain is not one of cant or ritual, but a leaning towards a power of infinite wisdom. Thoughts, music, the things we call inspiration, spring from the mysterious reservoirs of Nature. Never does a man approach nearer the line bordering life and death than on a mountain. He holds in his finger-tips the power of either; his very toes are arbiters of his destiny. And how small an organism he is, a mere atom amid forces that may arise and crush him; yet a dominant atom, for a time, of a wider orbit than his fellows of plain and city.

Man cannot exist without a philosophy of some kind. However hard he may try to keep awake he must always find something to lay his muddled head upon. . . . The philosophy of the hills is a simple one. On them we approach a little nearer to the ends of the Earth and the beginnings of Heaven. Over the Hills the spirit of Man passes towards his Maker.

★62★

I saw the clouds and dark vapours open gradually to right and left, rolling over one another in great smoky wreaths, and the tide (as it flowed gently in upon the sands) first whitening, then slightly tinged with gold and blue; and all at once a little line of insufferable brightness that (before I can write these five words) was grown to half an orb, and now to a whole one, too glorious to be distinctly seen. It is very odd it makes no figure on paper, yet I shall remember it as long as the sun, or at least as long as I endure. I wonder whether anybody ever saw it before. I hardly believe it.

★63★

Hast thou a charm to stay the Morning-Star
In his steep course? So long he seems to pause
On thy bald awful head, O sovran Blanc!
The Arve and Arveiron at thy base
Rave ceaselessly; but thou, most awful Form!
Risest from forth thy silent Sea of Pines,
How silently! Around thee and above
Deep is the air and dark, substantial, black,
An ebon mass: methinks thou piercest it,
As with a wedge! But when I look again,
It is thine own calm home, thy chrystal shrine,
Thy habitation from eternity!

O dread and silent Mount! I gazed upon thee,
Till thou, still present to the bodily sense,
Didst vanish from my thought: entranced in prayer
I worshipped the Invisible alone.
Yet, like some sweet beguiling melody,
So sweet, we know not we are listening to it,
Thou, the meanwhile, wast blending with my Thought,
Yea, with my Life and Life's own secret Joy:
Till the dilating Soul, enrapt, transfused,
Into the mighty vision passing—there,
As in her natural form, swelled vast to Heaven!

Awake, my soul! Not only passive praise
Thou owest! Not alone these swelling tears,
Mute thanks and secret ecstasy! Awake,
Voice of sweet song! Awake, my Heart, awake!
Green Vales and icy Cliffs, all join my Hymn.

Thou first and chief, sole Sovereign of the Vale!
O struggling with the Darkness all the night,
And visited all night by troops of stars,
Or when they climb the sky or when they sink:
Companion of the Morning-Star at Dawn,
Thyself Earth's rosy star, and of the Dawn
Co-herald: wake, O wake, and utter praise!
Who sank thy sunless pillars deep in Earth?
Who filled thy countenance with rosy light?
Who made thee parent of perpetual streams?

And you, ye five wild torrents fiercely glad!
Who called you forth from night and utter death,
From dark and icy caverns called you forth,
Down those precipitous, black, jagged Rocks,
For ever shattered and the same for ever?
Who gave you your invulnerable life?
Your strength, your speed, your fury and your joy,
Unceasing thunder and eternal foam?
And who commanded (and the silence came)
Here let the Billows stiffen, and have Rest?

Ye Ice-falls! ye that from the Mountain's brow
Adown enormous Ravines slope amain—
Torrents, methinks, that heard a mighty Voice,
And stopped at once amid their maddest plunge!
Motionless Torrents! silent Cataracts!
Who made you glorious as the Gates of Heaven
Beneath the keen full Moon? Who bade the Sun
Clothe you with Rainbows? Who, with living flowers
Of loveliest blue, spread garlands at your feet?
God! let the Torrents, like a Shout of Nations,
Answer! and let the Ice-plains echo, God!
God! sing, ye meadow-streams, with gladsome voice!
Ye Pine-groves, with your soft and soul-like sounds!
And they too have a voice, yon piles of Snow,
And in their perilous fall shall thunder, God!

Ye living flowers that skirt the eternal Frost!
Ye wild goats sporting round the Eagle's nest!
Ye Eagles, playmates of the Mountain Storm!

Ye lightnings, the dread arrows of the Clouds!
Ye signs and wonders of the element!
Utter forth God, and fill the Hills with Praise!

Thou too, hoar Mount! with thy sky-pointing Peaks,
Oft from whose feet the Avalanche, unheard,
Shoots downward, glittering through the pure Serene
Into the depth of Clouds, that veil thy breast—
Thou too again, stupendous Mountain! thou
That as I raise my head, awhile bowed low
In adoration, upward from thy Base
Slow travelling with dim eyes suffused with tears,
Solemnly seemest, like a vapoury cloud,
To rise before me—Rise, O ever rise,
Rise like a cloud of Incense, from the Earth!
Thou kingly Spirit throned among the hills,
Thou dread Ambassador from Earth to Heaven,
Great Hierarch! Tell thou the silent Sky,
And tell the Stars, and tell yon rising Sun,
Earth, with her thousand voices, praises God.

⋆64⋆

A cloud comes over Charlotte-street, and seems as if it were sailing softly on the April wind to fall in a blessed shower upon the lilac buds and thirsty anemones somewhere in Essex, or—who knows?—perhaps at Boulge. Out will run Mrs. Faiers, and with red arms and face of woe haul in the struggling windows of the cottage, and

make all tight. Beauty Bob will cast a bird's eye out at the shower, and bless the useful wet. Mr. Loder will observe to the farmer, for whom he is doing up a dozen of the Queen's heads, that it will be of great use; and the farmer will agree that his young barleys wanted it much. The German Ocean will dimple with innumerable pin-points, and porpoises rolling near the surface sneeze with unusual pellets of fresh water:

> Can such things be,
> And overcome us like a summer cloud,
> Without our special wonder?

Oh, this wonderful, wonderful world, and we who stand in the middle of it are all in a maze, except poor Matthews of Bedford, who fixes his eye on a wooden Christ and has no misgiving whatever. When I was at his chapel on Good Friday he called at the end of his grand sermon on some of the people to say merely this: that they believed Christ had redeemed them: and first one got up, and in sobs declared she believed it; and then another, and then another—I was quite overset—all poor people: how much richer than all who fill the London churches. Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven!

★65★

Having made up my mind not to visit any town, or put up at any inn, I commenced my 'wild-goose chase',

and bent my way, in many a zigzag direction, through the interior of part of the highlands, by the sides of its lakes and its mountains. The beauty and serenity of the former, and the grandeur or terrific aspect of the latter, I gazed upon with wonder, and with both was charmed to ecstasy. In moving forward, I was often accompanied or directed to some farmer's or grazier's house, by the herds or drovers, whom I fell in with; and, in some of these houses, I took up my abode, and often, by the pressing solicitations of my host and hostess, was prevailed upon to remain with them a day or two.

These kind—these hospitable people—I have never forgotten. Often the mistress of the house in these remote places, never having seen any person from England, examined my dress from head to foot, and in English—which, it was easy to discover, had been imperfectly taught her—made many enquiries respecting the country from whence I came; while the herds, with their bare knees, sat listening around, very seldom knowing what we were talking about. These herds, or some of the family, generally set or directed me to the house of some other distant grazier; and I met with the same kind and warm reception throughout my wanderings I had experienced at first.

On my getting refreshment of whey or milk in such places as these, I always found it difficult to get payment made for anything, as it seemed to give offence; and, when I could get any money slipped into the hands of the children, I was sure to be pursued, and obliged to

accept of a pocket full of bannocks and scones. On one occasion, I was detained all day and all night at a house of this kind, in listening to the tunes of a young man of the family who played well upon the Scottish pipes. I, in turn, whistled several Tyneside tunes to him; so that we could hardly get separated. Before my departure next day, I contrived by stealth to put some money into the hands of the children. I had not got far from the house till I was pursued by a beautiful young woman, who accosted me in 'badish' English, which she must have got off by heart just before she left the house, the purport of which was to urge my acceptance of the usual present.

★66★

A friend once called at a Highland cottage in Lochaber. There he found an old woman, who had just put her kail pot on the fire. Though no other food was in the house, her sense of hospitality lent invention to her brain and wings to her heels. She tripped out to her croft, cut down a little barley, graddened[1] it in the straw, winnowed it by throwing it against the wind, ground it in her quern, and applied it to the simmering kail pot as a thickening to the liquor. While this was in

[1]The housewife knelt before the fire holding a few stalks in her left hand. Setting the ears alight, she deftly beat out the grain with a stick, just when the husk was quite consumed. The grains, blackened like coal, were picked off the floor with the hand, and placed in the quern.

preparation, she made some of the meal into bannocks, which she baked by laying them upright against a stone placed near the fire. Thus, in less than half an hour, an excellent repast was smoking on the table.

★67★

Now as they were going along and talking, they espied a boy feeding his father's sheep. The boy was in very mean clothes, but of a fresh and well-favoured countenance; and as he sat by himself he sang. Hark, said Mr. Great-heart, to what the shepherd's boy saith: so they hearkened, and he said:

He that is down, needs fear no fall,
He that is low, no pride;
He that is humble, ever shall
Have God to be his guide.
I am content with what I have,
Little be it, or much;
And, Lord, contentment still I crave,
Because thou savest such.
Fullness to such a burden is
That go on pilgrimage;
Here little, and hereafter bliss,
Is best from age to age.

Then said their guide, Do you hear him? I will dare to say that this boy lives a merrier life, and wears more

of that herb called heart's-ease in his bosom, than he that is clad in silk and velvet.

★68★

For it is not to be doubted, but as God hath given man things profitable, so hath he allowed him honest comfort, delight and recreation in all the works of his hands. Nay, all his labours under the Sun without this are troubles and vexations of mind. For what is greedy gain without delight, but moiling and turmoiling in slavery? But comfortable delight, with content, is the good of every thing, and the pattern of Heaven. A morsel of bread with comfort, is better by much than a fat Ox with unquietness. And who can deny but that the principal end of an Orchard is the honest delight of one wearied with the work of his lawful calling? The very works of, and in, an Orchard and Garden, are better than the ease and rest of and from other labours. When God had made a man after his own Image, in a perfect state, and would have him to represent himself in authority, tranquillity, and pleasure upon the earth, he placed him in Paradise. What was Paradise? but a Garden, an Orchard of Trees and Herbs, full of pleasure, and nothing there but delights. The gods of the earth resembling the great God of Heaven in Authority, Majesty and abundance of all things, wherein is there most delight? and whither do they withdraw themselves

from the troublesom affairs of their estate, being tired with the hearing and judging of litigious Controversies, choaken (as it were) with the close air of their sumptuous Buildings, their stomachs cloyed with variety of Banquets, their ears filled and overburthened with tedious discoursings? Whither, but into their Orchards, made and prepared, dressed and destinated for that purpose, to renew and refresh their senses, and to call home their over-wearied spirits? Nay, it is (no doubt) a comfort to them to set open their casements into a most delicate Garden and Orchard, whereby they may not only see that, wherein they so much delighted, but also to give fresh, sweet and pleasant air to their Galleries and Chambers.

And look what these men do by reason of their greatness and ability, provoked with delight, the same doubtless, would every one of us do, if power were answerable to our desires; whereby we shew manifestly, that of all other delights on earth, they that are taken by Orchards are most excellent, and most agreeing with nature.

For whereas every other pleasure commonly fills some one of our senses, and that only with delight; this makes all our senses swim in pleasure, and that with infinite variety, joyned with no less commodity.

Unquiet. It is largely a question of environment. In our newer days the English have to learn how they may live with steam and electricity, with wireless and daily papers and the swift movements of cosmopolitan thought —an environment bound to produce unrest and discontent until, after many generations, perhaps, a comfortable way of living in it has been found. It is an environment not exclusively English but universal; to fit ourselves to it we must be citizens of the world in temper at least, realizing that the local skills and fitnesses no longer suffice.

But in William Smith's time, as the environment— the heaths and woodlands, the animals, the village thought—was so much simpler, so too some social fitness to it had long been achieved, and work in it was satisfying and often delightful, thanks to the old crafts. The rewards of labour were immediate; leisure, in the modern sense, was unknown and unwished for; but there was no great provocation to 'unrest', at least in country places. By being provincial a man could feel indeed at home and at peace. To know the neighbourhood through and through—this was the way to live. Universal law none knew; a parish of England and the time-honoured habits of English country folk made up the environment. As yet we seem to get nothing like so near and dear to us as that seems to have become to our grandparents. If we are winning the Cosmos we are

losing touch with England. Ours is the larger hope, of course, and will lead to the more splendid peace by and by.

★70★

Modern man lives in a hurly-burly of events, opening his eyes each morning, with the puzzled wonder of a child, to new discoveries and inventions. Emotionally and intellectually he lives from hand to mouth. Secondary and artificial things make strange noises in his ears. He is himself like a motor at rest before the cogs are engaged, is ready for progress but as yet makes none. The engine of his elaborate and mechanical civilisation moves with gusto, but to no end. A busy but aimless generation has learnt to control all forces but the tumult of its own soul. It is my fear that we may become a secondary and artificial people, ruined by the horrid sequels of the industrial revolution, which damaged souls even more than bodies. But the fear is no more than the negative counterpart of the active faith that we may restore our sense of eternal truths and elemental verities by the 'conservation of national resources', not in the material sense emphasised by Roosevelt in America, but by conserving the spiritual home of all humanity, the woods and rivers, the hills and valleys, the trees and bushes, the open expanses of sea and sky, by preserving the sources of true observation of living things, in their life and in their death.

No words, that I know of, will say what these mosses are. None are delicate enough, none perfect enough, none rich enough. How is one to tell of the rounded bosses of furred and beaming green—the starred divisions of rubied bloom, fine-filmed, as if the Rock Spirits could spin porphyry as we do glass—the traceries of intricate silver and fringes of amber, lustrous, arborescent, burnished through every fibre into fitful brightness and glossy traverses of silken change, yet all subdued and pensive, and framed for simplest, sweetest offices of grace? They will not be gathered, like the flowers, for chaplet or love-token; but of these the wild bird will make its nest, and the wearied child his pillow.

And, as the earth's first mercy, so they are its last gift to us. When all other service is vain, from plant and tree, the soft mosses and grey lichen take up their watch by the headstone. The woods, the blossoms, the gift-bearing grasses, have done their parts for a time, but these do service for ever. Trees for the builder's yard, flowers for the bride's chamber, corn for the granary, moss for the grave.

★72★

Perhaps there is no life except through us; a naked arm sliding in a rose-bush increases the beauty of the roses, and the grass is greener along the track left by a woman's dress; a desire rises in our heart towards everything that lives—and I remember that I kissed on Annette's lips the woods, the rushes, the heather and the rocks. Such memories, if they are mingled with a few grains of ironic pepper, are no doubt durable. I shall see.

★73★

It is hardly possible for the toil of a working man to be wasted more vexatiously than in digging deep drains in a marshy soil in winter; the frost thawing so as not to allow the carts to cross the soft ground with stones to fill the drains; the sides of them sliding in; the digger of them obliged, at his own expense, to clear them out again before they are filled with stones; obliged to get planks to stand upon, to keep him from sinking in bottomless moss; even with the planks, wet to the knees, from morning until night; the farmer who is to pay him holding his money unpaid until those drains are completed; they not completed until this farmer conveys stones to them; and they every day filling in afresh with new slips from the sides. Such, however, was my situation as a drainer in January 1830, in a bog

on the farm of Butterdean Mains, lying in the hollow near the hostelry locally known as 'Tammy Grant's'; now the Bank House Station of the North British Railway.

And a man working in such a bog so unprofitably to be in love, and not in a condition to tell his love; his greatest hindrance being that he is too poor to venture on presenting himself where his love would lead him!

After such days of dispiriting toil, I used to go once or twice a week, one week I went three times, across a moor to ——, where she lived with her parents. The distance over the moor was between three and four miles. The distance by public road was about six miles. I approached the house by the side of a wall, where was a large tree overshadowing the stack of turf fuel which belonged to the cottage. There I, time after time, sat down for several hours each time, and looked across the narrow road to the windows. Against one of them I saw the shadow of an arm, which, inside between the window and a candle, was moving to the stitches of a needle. It was the shadow of her arm; and to look at it was the object of my journey across those desolate moors so many times a week. In the cold I lay and watched this shadow, until I should have been frozen but there was a heat of the soul too strong for frost. Once she came out to the turf stack for fuel for the next morning's use. It was at bed time: nearly ten o'clock. I could have touched her. The time had come which for months I had longed for. It was a precious moment. But

I could not make use of it. I was in a dark corner when she came to lift the fuel, and knew that if I moved or spoke she would be frightened, and would run, perhaps scream. At all events, I was pleased to form a self-excuse from these considerations. But, in verity, I was unable to speak. I knew not what to say. She returned to the house. The door was fastened, the windows darkened, and I returned over the moors.

★74★

But I am sure I shall never forget the little squirrel I saw one morning run down a beech-tree to gather its winter store among the nut-trees. Fifteen times it went from its hiding place to the very tip of the branches where the nuts hang; it moved in light, timorous bounds, with its tail held over its back as in pictures; I could hear the sharp noise of the gathered nut, and then there was a sudden flight back to the tree which is its fortress. Does it pick nuts with its teeth or with its paws? I do not know; perhaps with its paws, for the rodents are little men who eat almost as we do, lifting their clawed hands to their mouths. . . . The same evening, under the same beeches on the edge of the wood while the grey slugs came down from the top of the beeches where they spend the day, I saw the wedding of the ants. Those which are to couple have wings and the couples join in the air; but as soon as the male

has clasped the female, their wings are entangled, their nerves are agitated, and the two entwined insects turn over and over and fall. The weddings I saw had been exalted very high above the trees, the golden rain fell from leaf to leaf with the sound of a shower, and as each couple touched the ground the two lovers, immediately unjoined, sprang up like the drops of a cascade and flew off rapidly and alone towards the sun and towards death. Strange and almost terrifying vision! I am very proud to have seen the sight and I despise myself for loving with so many precautions, turns and ruses, when I think how the ants give their whole life for life, and only separate for the females to carry the fertilised treasure to the ant-hill and for the males to die. I am inclined to think the males die immediately and that only the females fly up; but I was intoxicated at participating in this mystery, and as soon as I understood it I began to reflect in order to understand it better. . . .

★75★

Suddenly a roof, a gleam of sunlight reflected from a stone, the smell of a road would make me stop still, to enjoy the special pleasure that each of them gave me, and also because they appeared to be concealing, beneath what my eyes could see, something which they invited me to approach and seize from them, but which, despite all my efforts, I never managed to discover. As

I felt that the mysterious object was to be found in them, I would stand there in front of them, motionless, gazing, breathing, endeavouring to penetrate with my mind beyond the thing seen or smelt. . . . I would concentrate upon recalling exactly the line of the roof, the colour of the stone, which, without my being able to understand why, had seemed to me to be teeming, ready to open, to yield up to me the secret treasure of which they were themselves no more than the outer coverings. . . . I felt I had not, for the moment, the calm environment necessary for a successful pursuit of my researches, and that it would be better to think no more of the matter until I reached home, and not to exhaust myself in the meantime to no purpose. And so I concerned myself no longer with the mystery that lay hidden in a form or a perfume, quite at ease in my mind, since I was taking it home with me, protected by its visible and tangible covering, beneath which I should find it still alive, like the fish which, on days when I had been allowed to go out fishing, I used to carry back in my basket, buried in a couch of grass which kept them cool and fresh. Once in the house again I would begin to think of something else, and so my mind would become littered (as my room was with the flowers that I had gathered on my walks, or the odds and ends that people had given me) with a stone from the surface of which the sunlight was reflected, a roof, the sound of a bell, the smell of fallen leaves, a confused mass of different images, under which must have perished long ago

the reality of which I used to have some foreboding, but which I never had the energy to discover and bring to light.

★76★

At the end of the long hall there is a black-framed mirror, whose sombre and silvery depths seem to contain a ghostly manifestation of the walls, the high, vaulted roof with its dim recesses, and of the long, open windows. Beyond the first chamber of the mirror's depth, thrusting over its threshold are the green, thin reflections of rose-shoots, which grow beyond the sill and are there motionless. Behind them is a patch of landscape framed by the window-sashes, the garden with cherry-blossom, and, beyond the garden, the hills. There is also reflected among the other furniture of the room a vase of red and yellow tulips, standing isolated upon a table. In the mirror these flowers have less colour than in life, but they find an added luminousness in the cold spaces behind the glass.

As I look into those depths and see a representation of the world, ghostly and diminished of light, I am fascinated. Mirrors have always fascinated me. I am half-hypnotized as I gaze, my thoughts wander in a kind of trance. Gradually I become conscious with a calm yet passionate intensity of the appearances lurking in those imaginary depths. What is reality, the noumenon reality which is sometimes called God? It seems that in

those non-existent depths I so nearly receive an answer: perhaps it is unspeakable.

I turn away to look at the living flowers which stand rigid and calm, holding erect their cup-shaped faces. They are yellow and red tulips, beautiful at the first glance, but look longer, a minute, many minutes, and you are terrified. They are awful in their loveliness. So awful do they appear that beauty is wedded to what is hideous. They are so naked, so shameless in their arrogance. If one has eyes one should not dare to look at life too close. . . . But now see them in the mirror. There one may dare look. See how their loveliness is freed, detached from the material manifestation, from the function of sex, from life. But look longer; are they not now more real, more real than themselves? In the mirror they aspire to perfection, to detached and perfected beauty. They exist no longer in the peculiar form of space in which we move. They are not of the earth, neither dead nor living. They exist. That almost perfect beauty is a *reflection* of the crude and gaudy flowers before the intensity of whose sensuous being we blanch.

Sometimes I have imagined that an artist might paint that ineffable beauty, that reality behind the semblance, the symbol behind the reality. Slowly, and after deep contemplation, the spirit of an artist might enfold that beauty, and might in turn be enfolded by it, then perhaps his fingers might take the brushes. . . . The Chinese painters of the sixteenth and seventeenth cen-

turies have come very near to such a purely spiritual affirmation. Their paintings are static, crystalline, almost perfect. But even with the greatest, the personal vision cannot be communicated.

As I gazed, still in a day-dream, I fancied that if mirrors should be arranged one reflecting another, that the perfect symbol might exist somewhere in the depth of the farthest reflection. I fancied that the process might, even in the world as we know it, be reversed, and that some invisible substance was always before our eyes: that the reality was hidden in spaces non-existent to our perception. It is reflected and reflected, deintensified, materialized at each passage through that unperceived substance, till at last a crude semblance bursts upon us, as do these tulips, embodied, disenchanted.

★77★

Old Man, or Lad's-Love—in the name there's nothing
To one that knows not Lad's-love, or Old Man,
The hoar green feathery herb, almost a tree,
Growing with rosemary and lavender.
Even to one that knows it well, the names
Half decorate, half perplex, the thing it is:
At least, what that is clings not to the names
In spite of time. And yet I like the names.

The herb itself I like not, but for certain
I love it, as some day the child will love it

Who plucks a feather from the door-side bush
Whenever she goes in or out of the house.
Often she waits there, snipping the tips and shrivelling
The shreds at last on to the path, perhaps
Thinking, perhaps of nothing, till she sniffs
Her fingers and runs off. The bush is still
But half as tall as she, though it is as old;
So well she clips it. Not a word she says;
And I can only wonder how much hereafter
She will remember, with that bitter scent,
Of garden rows, and ancient damson trees
Topping a hedge, a bent path to a door,
A low thick bush beside the door, and me
Forbidding her to pick.

As for myself,
Where first I met the bitter scent is lost.
I, too, often shrivel the grey shreds,
Sniff them and think and sniff again and try
Once more to think what it is I am remembering,
Always in vain. I cannot like the scent,
Yet I would rather give up others more sweet,
With no meaning, than this bitter one.

I have mislaid the key. I sniff the spray
And think of nothing; I see and I hear nothing;
Yet seem, too, to be listening, lying in wait
For what I should, yet never can, remember:
No garden appears, no path, no hoar-green bush
Of lad's-love, or Old Man, no child beside,

Neither father nor mother, nor any playmate;
Only an avenue, dark, nameless, without end.

★78★

Looking back across the years I listen to the summer afternoon cooing of my aunt's white pigeons, and the soft clatter of their wings as they flutter upward from the lawn at the approach of one of the well-nourished cats. I remember, too, the smell of strawberry jam being made; and Aunt Evelyn with a green bee-veil over her head. . . . The large rambling garden, with its Irish yews and sloping paths and wind-buffeted rose arches, remains to haunt my sleep. The quince tree which grew beside the little pond was the only quince tree in the world. With a sense of abiding strangeness I see myself looking down from an upper window on a confusion of green branches shaken by the summer breeze. In an endless variety of dream-distorted versions the garden persists as the background of my unconscious existence.

★79★

And indeed this is the last and not the least gracious of the casual works of magic wrought by rain: that while it decreases light, yet it doubles it. If it dims the sky, it brightens the earth. It gives the roads (to the sympa-

thetic eye) something of the beauty of Venice. Shallow lakes of water reiterate every detail of earth and sky; we dwell in a double universe. Sometimes walking upon bare and lustrous pavements, wet under numerous lamps, a man seems a black blot on all that golden looking-glass and could fancy he was flying in a yellow sky. But wherever trees and towns hang head downwards in a pigmy puddle, the sense of Celestial topsy-turvydom is the same. This bright, wet, dazzling confusion of shape and shadow, of reality and reflection, will appeal strongly to any one with the transcendental instinct about this dreamy and dual life of ours. It will always give a man the strange sense of looking down at the skies.

★80★

On a morning early in May it was raining, quietly, luxuriously, with a continuous soothing shattering-down of warm drops. In the doorway of the little tool-shed I stood listening—listening to the gentle murmur on the roof, on the long fresh grass of a small orchard plot, and on the young leaves of the plum and the blossoming apple which made the daylight greener by half veiling the sky.

Beside and beyond these trees were lilacs, purpling for bloom, small hazels, young elms in a hedgerow—all fair with new greenness; and farther on, glimpses of cottage roof against the newly dug garden-ground of

the steep hillside. Above the half-diaphanous green tracery of the trees, cool delicious cloud, 'dropping fatness', darkened where it sagged nearer to the earth. The light was nowhere strong, but all tempered moistly, tenderly, to the tenderness of the young greenery.

I ought to have been busy, yet I stood and listened; for the earth seemed busy too, but in a softened way, managing its many businesses beautifully. The air seemed melting into numberless liquid sounds. Quite near—not three trees off—there was a nightingale nonchalantly babbling; from the neighbourhood of the cottage came, penetrating, the bleating of a newly-born goat; while in the orchard just before me Bettesworth stooped over a zinc pail, which, as he scrubbed it, gave out a low metallic note. Then there were three undertones or backgrounds of sound, that of the soft-falling rain being one of them. Another, which diapered the rain-noise just as the young leaves showered their diaper-work against the clouds, was the all but unnoticed singing of larks, high up in the wet. Lastly, to give the final note of mellowness, of flavoured richness to the morning, I could hear through the distance which globed and softened it a frequent 'Cuckoo, cuckoo.' The sound came and died away, as if the rain had dissolved it, and came again, and again was lost.

Framed by all this, Bettesworth stooped over his pail, careless of getting wet. His old earth-brown clothes seemed to belong to the moistened nook of orchard where he was working; so, too, did his occasional quiet

chatter harmonize well with the pattering of the warm rain. And for a time the drift of what he said was so much a part of our quiet country life that I took it as a matter of course, and let it pass by unnoticed.

But presently he raised his head.

'Have ye heared 'bout young Crosby over here? He's gone clean off his head. They took 'n off to the asylum at Brookwood this mornin'. Got this 'ere religion. I s'pose by all accounts he went right into 't; and that's what've come of it.'

I suggested that religious mania was often curable.

'Yes. I've knowed a many have it; and then they gets over it after a time. Get 'em away—that's what it wants. If they can get 'em where they can dummer somethin' else into 'em, then they be all right. Wants to give 'em a change, so's to get a little more enlightenment into their minds.'

He came to join me in the shed doorway, for shelter from a temporary thickening of the rain, and standing there he continued:

'I was up to my sister's at Middlesham o' Sunday. She'd bin to Brookwood to see her sister-in-law. If they hadn't let her' [the sister in-law] ''ome too soon that first time, she'd ha' bin all right. Wherefore now she's there again, and jest like a post. If they puts her anywhere, there she bides, and don't try for to do nothing. 'Relse, when she was there afore, they told my sister she'd work as well as e'er a woman in the place. She see several there what she knowed. Fred Baker's

wife, what used to be signalman, for one. But what most amused her was a old woman, when they was goin' out two by two for their walk in the grounds, flingin' her arms about and liftin' up her skirts an' dancin'. . . . She was havin' her reels and her capers in highly deglee.' The old man pondered a few moments, then concluded pensively, as he stepped out to his work again, 'What a shockin' thing, this mind!' His accent on the last word sounded almost resentful.

★81★

Coming through the village of Benenden, I heard a man talking very loudly about houses! houses! houses! It was a Methodist parson, in a house, close by the roadside. I pulled up, and stood still, in the middle of the road, but looking, in silent soberness, into the window (which was open) of the room in which the preacher was at work. I believe my stopping rather disconcerted him; for he got into shocking repetition. 'Do you KNOW', said he, laying great stress on the word KNOW: 'do you KNOW that you have ready for you houses, houses, I say; I say do you KNOW; do you KNOW that you have houses in the heavens not made with hands?' And, on he went to say, that, if Jesus had told them so, they would be saved, and that if he had not, and did not, they would be damned. Some girls whom I saw in the room, plump and rosy as could

be, did not seem at all daunted by these menaces; and indeed, they appeared to me to be thinking much more about getting houses in this world first; houses with pig-styes and little snug gardens attached to them, together with all other domestic and conjugal circumstances. The truth is, these fellows had no power over the minds of any but the miserable.

A full belly to the labourer was, in my opinion, the foundation of public morals and the only source of real public peace. It was with this opinion in my mind, that I wrote and published my little work, called *Cottage Economy*. It was written at North Lodge, a farm-house in Sussex, whither I had gone to reside for some time, for the purpose of teaching my youngest son how to go about in the fields and the woods and the lanes; teaching him to ride upon a pony, and to begin to be hardy and strong. I do not deny that Mrs. Brazier, the farmer's wife, helped me a great deal; for she, though then nearly eighty years of age, had brought up forty children and grandchildren, and had it said of her, that she had done more work herself than any woman in Sussex; and that there was not a working-man or woman in the parish who had not, first or last, either resided or been fed under her roof; and though she could neither write nor read, understood well the making of bread, the brewing of beer, the keeping of cows, the rearing of pigs, and was able to teach me practically all that I myself did not know touching the subjects upon which I was writing.

And when at last she stood complete in her silvery twilled silk, her lace tucker, her coral necklace and coral ear-drops, the Miss Gunns could see nothing to criticise except her hands, which bore the traces of butter-making, cheese-crushing, and even still coarser work. But Miss Nancy was not ashamed of that, for while she was dressing she narrated to her aunt how she and Priscilla had packed their boxes yesterday, because this morning was baking morning, and since they were leaving home, it was desirable to make a good supply of meat-pies for the kitchen; and as she concluded this judicious remark, she turned to the Miss Gunns that she might not commit the rudeness of not including them in the conversation. The Miss Gunns smiled stiffly, and thought what a pity it was that these rich country people, who could afford to buy such good clothes (really Miss Nancy's lace and silk were very costly), should be brought up in utter ignorance and vulgarity. She actually said 'mate' for 'meat', ''appen' for 'perhaps', and ''oss' for 'horse', which, to young ladies living in good Lytherly society, who habitually said 'orse, even in domestic privacy, and only said 'appen on the right occasions, was necessarily shocking. Miss Nancy, indeed, had never been to any school higher than Dame Tedman's: her acquaintance with profane literature hardly went beyond the rhymes she had worked in her large sampler under the lamb and

shepherdess; and in order to balance an account, she was obliged to effect her subtraction by removing visible metallic shillings and sixpences from a visible metallic total. There is hardly a servant-maid in these days who is not better informed than Miss Nancy; yet she had the essential attributes of a lady—high veracity, delicate honour in her dealings, deference to others, and refined personal habits—and lest these should not suffice to convince grammatical fair ones that her feelings can at all resemble theirs, I will add that she was slightly proud and exacting, and as constant in her affection towards a baseless opinion as towards an erring lover.

★83★

We were sitting—Miss Matty and I—much as usual; she in the blue chintz easy-chair, with her back to the light, and her knitting in her hand—I reading aloud the *St. James's Chronicle*. A few minutes more, and we should have gone to make the little alterations in dress usual before calling time (twelve o'clock) in Cranford. I remember the scene and the date well. We had been talking of the Signior's rapid recovery since the warmer weather had set in, and praising Mr. Hoggins's skill, and lamenting his want of refinement and manner —(it seems a curious coincidence that this should have been our subject, but so it was)—when a knock was heard; a caller's knock—three distinct taps—and we

were flying (that is to say, Miss Matty could not walk very fast, having had a touch of rheumatism) to our rooms to change cap and collars, when Miss Pole arrested us by calling out as she came up the stairs, 'Don't go—I can't wait—it is not twelve, I know—but never mind your dress—I must speak to you.' We did our best to look as if it was not we who had made the hurried movement, the sound of which she had heard; for, of course, we did not like to have it supposed that we had any old clothes that it was convenient to wear out in the 'sanctuary of home', as Miss Jenkyns once prettily called the back parlour, where she was tying up preserves. So we threw our gentility with double force into our manners, and very genteel we were for two minutes while Miss Pole recovered breath, and excited our curiosity strongly by lifting up her hands in amazement, and bringing them down in silence, as if what she had to say was too big for words, and could only be expressed by pantomime.

'What do you think, Miss Matty? What *do* you think? Lady Glenmire is to marry—is to be married, I mean—Lady Glenmire—Mr. Hoggins—Mr. Hoggins is going to marry Lady Glenmire!'

'Marry!' said we, 'Marry! Madness!'

'Marry!' said Miss Pole with the decision that belonged to her character. '*I* said marry! as you do; and I also said, "What a fool my lady is going to make of her self!" I could have said "Madness!" but I controlled myself, for it was in a public shop that I heard it. Where

feminine delicacy is gone to, I don't know! You and I, Miss Matty, would have been ashamed to have known that our marriage was spoken of in a grocer's shop, in the hearing of shopmen!'

'But', said Miss Matty, sighing as one recovering from a blow, 'perhaps it is not true. Perhaps we are doing her injustice.'

'No!' said Miss Pole. 'I have taken care to ascertain that. I went straight to Mrs. FitzAdam, to borrow a cookery book which I knew she had; and I introduced my congratulations à propos of the difficulty gentlemen must have in housekeeping; and Mrs. FitzAdam bridled up, and said that she believed it was true, though how and where I could have heard it she did not know. She said her brother and Lady Glenmire had come to an understanding at last. 'Understanding!' such a coarse word. But my lady will have to come down to many a want of refinement. I have reason to believe Mr. Hoggins sups on bread-and-cheese and beer every night.'

⋆84⋆

If you were down here, I think I should make you take a life-size Oil Sketch of the Head and Shoulders of my Captain of the Lugger. You see by the enclosed that these are neither of them of a bad sort; and the Man's Soul is every way as well proportioned, missing in nothing that may become a Man, as I believe. He and I

will, I doubt, part Company; well as he likes me, which is perhaps as well as a sailor cares for any one but Wife and Children: he likes to be, what he is born to be, his own sole Master, of himself, and of other men. . . .

My Captain lives at Lowestoft, and is there at present; he also in anxiety about his Wife who was brought to bed the very same day my Landlady died, and (as a letter from him this morning tells me) has a hard time of it. I should certainly like a large Oil-sketch, like Thackeray's, done in your most hasty, and worst, style, to hang up with Thackeray and Tennyson, with whom he shares a certain grandeur of Soul and Body. As you guess, the colouring is (when the Man is all well) as fine as his form; the finest Saxon type; with that complexion which Montaigne calls 'vif, mâle, et flamboyant'; blue eyes; and strictly auburn hair, that any woman might sigh to possess. . . .

If you sketch in a head, you might send it down to me to look at, so as I might be able to guess if there were any likelihood in that way of proceeding. Merely the Lines of Feature indicated, even by Chalk, might do. As I told you, the Head is of the large type, or size, the proper capital of a six foot Body, of the broad dimensions you see in the Photograph. . . .

The Lugger is now preparing in the Harbour beside me; the Captain here, there and everywhere; with a word for no one but on business; the other side of the Man you saw looking for Birds' Nests; all things in their season. I am sure the Man is fit to be the King of a

Kingdom as well as of a Lugger. To-day he gives the customary dinner to his Crew before starting, and my own two men go to it; and I am asked too; but will not spoil their fun.

I declare, you and I have seen A Man! Have we not? Made in the mould of what Humanity should be, Body and Soul, a poor Fisherman. The proud fellow had better have kept me for a Partner in some of his responsibilities. But no; he must rule alone, as is right he should too.

★85★

It is thus, however, absolutely necessary to the virtue of war that it should be waged by personal strength, not by money or machinery. A nation that fights with a mercenary force, or with torpedoes instead of its own arms, is dying. Not but that there is more true courage in modern than even in ancient war; but this is, first, because all the remaining life of European nations is with a morbid intensity thrown into their soldiers; and, secondly, because their present heroism is the culmination of centuries of inbred and traditional valour, which Athena taught them by forcing them to govern the foam of the sea-wave and of the horse—not the steam of kettles.

But no higher wage, no income, will buy for men that satisfaction which of old—until machinery made drudges of them—streamed into their muscles all day long from close contact with iron, timber, clay, wind and wave, horse-strength. It tingled up in the niceties of touch, sight, scent. The very ears unawares received it, as when the plane went singing over the wood, or the exact chisel went tapping in (under the mallet) to the hard ash with gentle sound. But these intimacies are over. Although they have so much more leisure men can now taste little solace in life, of the sort that skilled hand-work used to yield to them. Just as the seaman to-day has to face the stoke-hole rather than the gale, and knows more of heat-waves than of sea-waves, so throughout. In what was once the wheelwright's shop, where Englishmen grew friendly with the grain of timber and with sharp tool, nowadays untrained youths wait upon machines, hardly knowing oak from ash or caring for the qualities of either. And this is but one tiny item in the immensity of changes which have overtaken labour throughout the civilised world. The products of work are, to be sure, as important as ever—what is to become of us all if the dockers will not sweat for us or the miners risk their lives? That civilisation may flourish a less-civilised working-class must work. . . .

But, leaving such large matters, I would speak of a smaller one. Is there—it is worth asking—such laugh-

ter about labour, such fun, such gamesome good temper, as cheered the long hours in my shop in 1884? Are we not taking industry too seriously to be sensible about it? Reading of 'Scientific Management' I recall something quite different from that—something friendly, jolly, by no means scientific—which reached down to my time from an older England. A mischievous spirit itself freshened one up sometimes.

★87★

'I did often go out to work at four in the mornin', as a boy', Luke Hulle remarked one day, when haymaking had begun and he was busy mowing, 'and plenty o' times did not leave stable till seven o' evenings. But we was happy and didn't mind nothin'. There wasn't the pride in them days as in now; and us meant workin'. There was a sight more o' friendliness then as well—folks did seem more all alike, and not one above another; and us was content. But what be it now? Why now 'tis—if one o' the youngsters hasn't got three or four suits and three or four pairs o' boots, they bain't satisfied. And what's a-goin' to satisfy such as they?

'I tell yer as they looks upon comin' on the land as a punishment; and what's more, there be many o' the fathers o' the youngest on 'em do look at it in the same fashion. Why, here's my neighbour, Harry Clegg, a-talking of his varmint of a son, says to me this way:

"Well, if he don't turn over a new leaf soon, he'll go straight on the farm!" "For why not?" says I; "'tain't no disgrace in it, be ther'?"

'But, lor' bless yer, some o' the mothers ain't no better, and aids and abets such foolishness in 'em, if, for the matter of that, they ain't afear'd on 'em. You knows as well as me as a 'ooman can lead a man a'most where she do like. Can't a-been about the world a lot wi'out havin' seen summut o' that. Ay; seen scores led away and brought to ruin wi' it, I have. Wull, it be the same here. The lads about knows as no girl'll look at 'em while they bides on a farm; don't lead to nothin', they says; do lead, 'wever, to nothin' but hard work, in a cottage stuck way alone, and no variety.

'And there's plenty comes along and tells 'em the same, and talks o' the callin' o' the land as the lowest o' the low. So the young folks forgets the old as you might say, and all as was in 'em; dresses theirselves up, gets off to the towns, and comes back wi' town manhers and town gait; but the main of it be all sham, just as it be all pride at bottom.'

Luke spoke with a ring of contempt in his voice. 'You set any on 'em a job', he went on, after one or two pulls at his pipe—'you set 'em a job, and you'll be sure to find as the main on 'em as comes to farm work now be melch-hearted and soon darnted. They bain't out for all as can be picked up, in all manner o' ways and for the main part o' the year, but to molly for theirselves—that be all. But I can tell you—and you

knows as there be hundreds done the same—as when I begun, I did work for nine shillun a week—ay, and since I been married.

'But that weren't my whole earnings; no fear! Such as that 'ouldn't 'a done. I reckoned the nine and ten shillun, and what it rose to, wer just wet and dry money, and to be added to by any industrious man. Why, take this job as I be at now; I don't mind a-tellin' of yer as I be taking a guinea a week at it. And what about the hedgin' and ditchin' in winter times, at so much the chain, accordin' to what it be? Or what about overtime and piece-work at such jobs as cuttin' out and hoeing turnips, or the wheat and the beans and the barley, come the spring months; or the hay as we be at now?

'And then, look you again at when the corn harvest do begin. 'Tis true as the main be cut, these days, with the binder; but it ain't every season as that can be worked, especial' when the weather's been rough and the crop has got laid and twisted. It ain't all over with sickle and the hook and the scythe yet awhile, for I've seed a farmer pay as high as fourteen and fifteen shillun an acre to get his wheat cut the best way as he could, and since them 'nation machines come in.

'But who do yer think be a-goin' to cut it now? Do you think many of them as comes out here as a last resort, as you might say, knows how to work a sickle and a hook, much less such a tool as this here? I tell yer there's gettin' few now as can use a scythe, or knows

the grass-nail from the pole-ring, or the nibs from the snead, just as there be gettin' few as can do hundreds o' other jobs as is wanted on every farm, don't matter where it be.

''Tis like this—we farm hands be skilled hands, though other folks doesn't seem to reckon as 'tis so. And it be just here as they as comes along finds as there be more to be learnt than 'em thought for. They don't like it neither; it be too rough for 'em, and by rights they've no business here at all. But they wants the same higher wages, all the same, and wet or dry, as the sayin' is, and as though 'em knew'd all about it and was fit to do piecework and make overtime.

'They say as livin's dearer. And so it be, some ways. And they says again as there bain't the piecework or variety as was to be had in times gone by. Wull, there's plenty o' tools gone out o' use in my time, and there be a sight more machinery and not the labour wanted as ther' was. And that's true again. But I says this—if a man do like to learn the things as a farmer can never do without, never, and leave the leaden socks at home as he've sometimes got in his shoes, there's as good money to be won on the land as anywheres, and a deal healthier life to be gotten at the same time.

'I know right enough, as with some as muddles on out here, though the fixed wage, apart from earnings, be a quarter again as high as it wer' when I first come back, as they be worse off now than us then. When my father wer' livin' us had a tidy-sized garden and a good

piggery, and a good house at eighteenpence. And us had two pigs: killed one, and he helped to pay rent; brought t'other in house, and rubbed the salt in un of evenings, famous; and with that, and a bit earned harvestin' and piecework, us often did uncommons nicely.

'And I'll tell yer another thing—there weren't half the sickness them days as there be now. What us did eat wer' good: the bread wer' home-made, every crust on it; and the bacon home-cured; and so we knew'd what was in the lot, like, and what we was a-puttin' inside. We didn't want so much, neither; nor look for so much, them days. Why, many's the time I've come home with a packet o' rushlights and an ounce o' tea; and that had to last a week,'—and Luke laughed loudly at the thought; 'but we was happier then than some ever will let 'emselves be now, for us wer' content, and ther' weren't so much pride and gaddin' and the rest as ther' be these days.

'My grandfather ever talk of the hungry 'forties, you asks? Ah—times; and what's more, my father done the same. And they did allus say this—"We did live and wer' merry, and so meut you be. Don't you be upstart: if you be offered a job, no matter what it be—take and do it." Grandfather did only laugh, bless yer! when he spoke o' them times, and 'ould allus finish, same as this —"Us did live—what more did ye want?" They bain't like that now—leastways, not a lot bain't.

'Ah', he continued after a pause, 'they old folk—God bless 'em! Kep' on at it all their time, they did;

and you may take this as Bible truth, you may—work wer' bred in 'em, I tell yer, and wi' folks o' their mental, it wer' a great denial to 'em when they was forced to give over and felt as they was falterin'.'

There was silence after that, while Luke whetted his scythe with the stone he carried at his back in a belt, and then went to work with a six-foot swing at the tall, rank grass close at hand. His job at the moment was to cut out the corners and awkward places where the machine could not reach, and in the very same meadow in which he had done the hedging three months before. There was a crop here of two tons to the acre, if it could be got in well. The cocks-foot grew rank and high in the shade beneath the elms; but farther out in the meadow the sun shone on a myriad buttercups and clover heads, and the warm winds of June played with the finer grasses and drew the scents from the countless flowering plants that go to make rich herbage.

★88★

Thirteen years ago he began his husbandry, by taking an acre of moor, which he pared and burnt, spread three chaldrons of lime among the ashes, and sowed it with oats. . . .

This first essay was very spirited; but not carried on upon principles which can altogether be approved of. Indeed, it could not be expected that a poor collier

should strike at once and without any experience into an accurate and correct husbandry. His next effort was upon an addition of eight acres, which however, was too much for him to improve at once; but he effected it by degrees. These acres were certainly stony, so that, after a division of walls built out of them, many remained. One acre cost him two months to clear, and fill up the holes. Some single stones required near a week. Laborious as the work was, he completed it by degrees and pared and burnt the soil.

Two years ago he took in eight acres more on which he is now hard at work. It is astonishing with what perseverance he attacks the most enormous stones, cutting them in pieces, carrying them away, and then bringing mould to fill the holes up; and he has such an idea of neatness that he will not pass one.

Attentive to every object that can render his little farm either profitable or agreeable, he has, with no slight trouble, directed a little rill of water from the moor through his fields; by which means he not only has water in every field for his cattle, but can also water some of his grass and therefore fertilize it much. Were I to dwell upon every circumstance of this collier's husbandry, I should be afraid of tediousness; but I shall not conclude without attempting to give you some idea of the man as well as his farm. I have shown you how he has managed, for several years, above nine acres of land, much of it always in tillage, and some constantly fresh breaking up and improving—we found

him cropping his land several years successively (a practice, though bad, of increasing labour) never sowing any without previous ample liming and three or four ploughings;—adding to his cultivated land, by perfectly clearing the fresh soil from all stones, some of them an enormous size, and of many tons weight; and by paring and burning in the most spirited and laborious manner. When you consider these circumstances, and that at the same time he has had the courage to attack eight acres more—will you not conclude he has received much assistance, either money or labour; or that many favourable circumstances hitherto unrelated have enabled him to make such advances in so spirited a conduct? But the very contrary of all this is the case. His work in the colliery has been regular, equal in every respect to the other men, and in some superior. His hour of going to the mine is twelve o'clock at night, the work is over at noon the next day. The remainder is all the time he had had to perform what I can scarcely call less than wonders.

Nor has he ever received the least assistance of any kind or ever expended 1/- in hiring the labour of another man. The quantity of lime he has laid upon the land is very great, and much more than what is commonly used by the neighbouring farmers; the number of ploughings he has given his fields is equally superior; and yet all his labour has been performed with a single gallway: the lime brought six miles. It is astonishing what a spirit of perseverance must have animated this

extraordinary man, to execute with such slight engines work that will put many farmers, with teams, to the blush. Some assistance in weeding potatoes etc. in harvest he has had from his family; but you may suppose it is not considerable, when I tell you, that of four or five children, he has only one son about fourteen years of age, who works with him constantly in the colliery. From the time of leaving off work in the mine till that of sleeping, he regularly spent in unremitting labour on his farm. Since his beginning he has never had more than four hours' sleep, and of bright star light or moon light nights seldom so much. The regular severe fatigue of twelve hours' labour in the colliery has not been sufficient to bow down the spirit of this poor fellow; he applies the remainder of the day, and even steals from the night, to prosecute his favourite works of husbandry—that is, to make up his hours of work twenty out of the twenty-four.

Such conduct requires a genius of a peculiar cast. Daring in his courage and spirited in his ideas, the most extensive plans are neither too vast nor too complicated to be embraced with facility by his bold and comprehensive imagination. . . . I asked him what he would do if he had his whole time to apply to his farm.

'I would perform something', said he, 'at present I do nothing.'

★89★

But even if we make his (the labourer's) degradation and misery out to be as extreme as possible, his capability for bettering his lot by his exertions must be borne in mind. The hideous barracks which once contained Scotland's married labour produced a Burns. From the sanitariless cottages of England emerged a Cobbett. John Clare was the son of a pauper, and the grandson of a bastard. William Huntingdon was the tenth child of a Kentish day labourer; William Barnes the offspring of a bankrupt farmer in one of the most backward of England's agricultural shires. We hear of a Scottish labourer, only taught to read after marriage, becoming content to scrape mud off the roads all the week if only on Sundays he were able to study astronomical works.

★90★

Although I could mention at least twenty instances of the most interesting kind, I will only add one which occurred this winter: it is that of a boy who left school more than a year ago, and was then just turned ten years of age: he was fond of his books, and among other things, of geography: on asking his father some time ago how he was going on, he answered: 'Why, sir, it is quite wonderful—he has got his three cousins and another boy, and his eldest brother of seventeen who had

never been at school, and he teaches 'em every evening: they pay for the candles, and if they are pleased at the end of the winter with what they have learnt, they will give him something: my eldest boy, whom I could make nothing of, stays at home every evening, and is become quite tame and well-behaved.' I found, on enquiring, these boys had bought copy-books at the school to write in; and this little boy of eleven years of age had spent his winter evenings in a way which made his father's cottage cheerful and happy: he is reforming his brother, and has made his home into a school for humanizing others: whereas, if he had had less education, everything about him and about his house would have been stupid, dull and uninteresting. I sent for the boy, made him a present of three or four small maps to help him to teach geography, and told him his scholars should have cheap books from the school, and I never knew a little fellow look more happy.

★91★

In my early years I was of a waulkly constitution, so much so that my mother told me she never could have dreamt I should live to make a man, while the sister that was born with me, being a twin, was as much to the contrary, a fine lively bonny wench, whose turn it was to die first; she lived but a few weeks, proving the old saying for once mistaken, 'that the weakest

always goeth to the wall.' As my parents had the good fate to have but a small family, I being the eldest of 4, two of whom dyed in their infancy, my mother's hopeful ambition ran high of being able to make me a good scholar, as she said she experienced enough in her own case to avoid bringing up her children in ignorance; but God help her, her hopeful and tender kindness was often cross'd with difficulty, for there was often enough to do to keep cart upon wheels, as the saying is, without incurring an extra expense of pulling me to school, though she never lost the opportunity when she was able to send me, nor woud my father interfere till downright necessity from poverty forced him to check her kind intentions; for he was a tender father to his children, and I have every reason to turn to their memories with the warmest feelings of gratitude and satisfaction. . . .

In cases of extreme poverty, my father took me to labour with him, and made me a light flail for threshing. . . . I resigned myself willingly to the hardest toils, and tho' one of the weakest, was stubborn and stomachful, and never flinched from the roughest labour; by that means, I always secured the favour of my masters, and escaped the ignominy that brands the name of idleness; my character was always 'weak but willing.' I believe I was not older than 10 when my father took me to seek the scanty rewards of industry; Winter was generally my season of imprisonment in the dusty barn, Spring and Summer my assistance was wanted else-

where, in tending sheep or horses in the fields, or scaring birds from the grain, or weeding it; which was a delightful employment, as the old women's memories never failed of tales to smoothen our labour; for as every day came, new Giants, Hobgoblins, and fairies was ready to pass it away.

As to my schooling, I think never a year pass'd me till I was 11 or 12, but 3 months or more at the worst of times was luckily spared for my improvement, first with an old woman in the village, and latterly with a master at a distance from it. Here soon as I began to learn to write, the readiness of the Boys always practising urged and prompted my ambition to make the best use of my absence from school, as well as at it, and my master was always surprised to find me improved every fresh visit, instead of having lost what I had learned before; for which, to my benefit, he never failed to give me tokens of encouragement. Never a leisure hour pass'd me without making use of it; every winter night, our once unlettered hut was wonderfully changed in its appearance to a schoolroom. The old table, which, old as it was, doubtless never was honoured with higher employment all its days than the convenience of bearing at meal times the luxury of a barley loaf, or dish of potatoes, was now covered with the rude beggings of scientifical requisitions, pens, ink, and paper—one hour, hobbling the pen at sheephooks and tarbottles and another, trying on a slate a knotty question in Numeration, or Pounds, Shillings and Pence; at which

times my parents' triumphant anxiety was pleasingly experienced; for my mother would often stop her wheel, or look off from her work, to urge with a smile of the warmest rapture in my father's face her prophesy of my success, saying 'she'd be bound I should one day be able to reward them with my pen for the trouble they had taken in giving me schooling.'

★92★

But although missionary effort had done much to emphasise the need of a school system, its absence would not necessarily entail a state of mental inertia. In those parishes which afford the most complete examples of a social hierarchy, and where agrarian change had not deprived the peasantry of rights on the soil, the life of a labourer might be itself more instructive and intelligible than that of his counterpart, the urban artisan. His work at home and in the field afforded a more varied range of experience, in which the relation of means to ends was easily grasped. He saw the nature and meaning of his industry, often the whole processes and their connection with social and domestic needs. . . . His wife span for domestic uses, and trained her children in the household arts. . . . And not only was the supply of daily needs a labour which conveyed its own lesson, inspired interests and exercised habits of organisation and self-discipline; but the intimate relations subsisting

between the various functions of a village group, the natural correspondence between the parts of a fabric which was the result of age-long growth, rendered its life in some measure an intelligible whole. The appearance of a self-acting community, developing its own discipline, culture and outlook on the world, was preserved in the administration of open-field husbandry, and more generally in the round of common amusements and the whole body of rustic traditions and beliefs.

★93★

The farm of Tedderfield, situated on the hill-face above Neidpath Castle, a mile from Peebles, the property of the Earl of March, was occupied, at the rent of eighteen pounds, by an honest man named David Grieve. . . . This family (of fourteen children) afforded an example of the virtuous frugal life of the rural people of Scotland previous to that extension of industry which brought wealth and many comforts into our country. The breakfast was oatmeal porridge; the supper, a thinner farinaceous composition named sowens; for the dinner there was seldom butcher-meat: the ordinary mess was a thin broth called Lenten Kail, composed of a ball of oatmeal kneaded up with butter, boiled in an infusion of cabbage, and eaten with barley or pease-meal bannocks. Strange as it may seem, a people of many fine qualities were reared in this plain style, and people of

bone and muscle, mentally as well as physically. There was not a particle of luxury in that Sabine life; hardly a single article of the kinds sold in shops was used. The food was all obtained from the farm, and the clothing was wholly of homespun. I cannot be under any mistake about it, for I have often heard the household and its ways described by my maternal grandmother, who was David Grieve's eldest daughter. Even the education of the children was conducted at home, the mother giving them lessons while seated at her spinning wheel.

Janet, the eldest girl, was wedded at eighteen by a middle-aged farmer, who rented a large tract of pasturage. This farm, called Newby, was not less than seven miles long. . . . The marriage took place in 1768. On the day preceding the event, Janet's 'providing', which was sumptuous, was despatched in a cart from Tedderfield to what was to be her new home; the load of various articles being conspicuously surmounted by a spinning-wheel, decorated with ribbons of different colours. . . . There was a much less frugal style of life at Newby than at Tedderfield. Although the homestead consisted of only a cottage, containing a kitchen and parlour, with the appendages of a barn, etc., it gave shelter every night to groups of vagrant people.

My grandmother and her maids were generally up at an early hour in the morning to attend to the ewes, and their time for going to rest must have consequently been an early one. There was always, however, a period

called 'between gloaming and supper-time', during which another industry was practised. Then it was that the wheels were brought out for the spinning of the yarn which was to constitute the clothing of the family. And I often think that it must have been a pleasing sight in that humble hall—the handsome young mistress amidst her troop of maidens, all busy with foot and finger, while the shepherds and their master would be telling stories or cracking jokes for the general entertainment, or some one with a good voice would be singing the songs of Ramsay and Hamilton.

⋆94⋆

My great-uncle's establishment was that of the first-rate yeoman of that period—the Yeoman that already began to be styled by courtesy an Esquire. Mr. Tovell might possess an estate of some eight hundred pounds per annum, a portion of which he himself cultivated. Educated at a mercantile school, he often said of himself, 'Jack will never make a gentleman'; yet he had a native dignity of mind and manners, which might have enabled him to pass muster in that character with any but very fastidious critics. His house was large, and the surrounding moat, the rookery, the ancient dovecot and the well-stored fishponds, were such as might have suited a gentleman's seat of some consequence; but one side of the house immediately overlooked a

farm-yard, full of all sorts of domestic animals, and the scene of constant bustle and noise. On entering the house, there was nothing at first sight to remind one of the farm:—a spacious hall, paved with black and white marble—at one extremity a very handsome drawing-room, and at the other a fine old staircase of black oak, polished till it was as slippery as ice, and having a chime clock and a barrel-organ on its landing-places. But this drawing-room, a corresponding dining parlour, and a handsome sleeping apartment upstairs, were all tabooed ground, and made use of on great and solemn occasions only—such as rent-days, and an occasional visit with which Mr. Tovell was honoured by a neighbouring peer. At all other times the family and their visitors lived entirely in the old-fashioned kitchen along with the servants. My great-uncle occupied an arm-chair, or, in attacks of gout, a couch on one side of a large open chimney. Mrs. Tovell sat at a small table, on which, in the evening, stood one small candle in an iron candlestick, plying her needle by the feeble glimmer, surrounded by her maids, all busy at the same employment; but in winter a noble block of wood, sometimes the whole circumference of a pollard, threw its comfortable warmth and cheerful blaze over the apartment.

At a very early hour in the morning, the alarum called the maids, and their mistress also; and if the former were tardy, a louder alarum, and more formidable, was heard chiding the delay—not that scolding was pe-

culiar to any occasion, it regularly ran on through all the day, like bells on harness, inspiriting the work, whether it were done ill or well. After the important business of the dairy, and a hasty breakfast, their respective employments were again resumed; that which the mistress took for her especial privilege, being the scrubbing of the floors of the state apartments. A new servant, ignorant of her presumption, was found one morning on her knees, hard at work on the floor of one of these preserves, and was thus addressed by her mistress:—'*You* wash such floors as these? Give me the brush this instant, and troop to the scullery and wash that, madam!. . . As true as G—d's in heaven, here comes Lord Rochford, to call on Mr. Tovell. Here, take my mantle' (a blue woollen apron), 'and I'll go to the door!'

If the sacred apartments had not been opened, the family dined on this wise;—the heads seated in the kitchen at an old table; the farm-men standing in the adjoining scullery, door open—the female servants at a side table, called a *bouter;*—with the principals, at the table, perchance some travelling rat-catcher, or tinker, or farrier, or an occasional gardener in his shirt sleeves, his face probably streaming with perspiration.

Three or four times a year there came to the farm-house door a picturesque figure whom I may justly call the last of the packmen. He was a Scotchman—originally of Edinburgh—and he always presented himself in a suit of Scotch tweed, black and white in colour and of a startlingly large check in pattern. He carried a plaid around his shoulders, and his head was surmounted by what we called a Scotch cap, with little tails to it. On his arrival and entrance into the big kitchen all the folk of the house assembled, and everybody, from the stately old mistress herself down to the small boy with the inquisitive mind and the observant eyes, entered upon a period of mild excitement.

'Scotty', as he was called thereabouts, spread out the contents of his pack on the dressers and tables. They included everything, from real silk gowns to papers of pins. He also sold diamonds of paste and chains alleged to be of real gold, and in this capacity he was a sad cause of temptation to the maid-servants. To me he was chiefly interesting because he sold Yorkshire chap-books—wonderful things!—*The Shipton*, and the like. And when he sat down for an hour's rest and refreshment he told tales of Edinburgh—such a wonderful city, and so far, far away that I felt I should never see it, even though I lived to be a hundred years old. And when I did see it, I remembered 'Scotty's' descrip-

tions, and there was a glamour in them which was more real than the real.

There was an amusing little man who came to the farm-house sometimes—chiefly, I believe, to make garments for myself. I have a vivid recollection of them and of him; the trousers were peach-bloom in colour, and he was a little man with an enormous head, the crown of which was polished like an ivory ball. When he came to make clothes the window place in the big kitchen was given up to him, and a table placed in it. Upon this he squatted like an Eastern idol, and all the time he was sewing he worked his tongue unceasingly.

He possessed a richly-stored repertoire of country-side stories; he knew the affairs, the gossip and the scandals of a score of villages, and as he was a man of advanced years and a retentive memory, he never exhausted his stock of stories.

Once a year came the Ruddle-man, selling red ruddle wherewith to mark the sheep; once a year came a man from the Low Countries bringing armies of geese that filled the whole village with sibilant sound until they were either bought up and dispersed in companies or moved on elsewhere. Once a year, too, came the man who sold nothing but nails—nails of every size and shape and all degrees of sharpness; and now and then turned up a blear-eyed, weather-beaten Irish piper, who made weird music which nobody understood.

Reddlemen of the old school are now but seldom seen. Since the introduction of railways, Wessex farmers have managed to do without these Mephistophelian visitants, and the bright pigment so largely used by shepherds in preparing sheep for the fair is obtained by other routes. Even those who yet survive are losing the poetry of existence which characterized them when the pursuit of the trade meant periodical journeys to the pit whence the material was dug, a regular camping out from month to month, except in the depth of winter, a peregrination among farms which could be counted by the hundred, and in spite of this Arab existence the preservation of that respectability which is insured by the never-failing production of a well-lined purse.

Reddle spreads its lively hues over everything it lights on, and stamps unmistakably, as with the mark of Cain, any person who has handled it half an hour.

A child's first sight of a reddleman was an epoch in his life. That blood-coloured figure was a sublimation of all the horrid dreams which had afflicted the juvenile spirit since imagination began. 'The reddleman is coming for you!' had been the formulated threat of Wessex mothers for many generations. He was successfully supplanted for a while, at the beginning of the present century, by Buonaparte; but as process of time rendered the latter personage stale and ineffective the old-

er phrase resumed its early prominence. And now the reddleman has in turn followed Buonaparte to the land of worn-out bogeys, and his place is filled by modern inventions.

The reddleman lived like a gipsy; but gipsies he scorned. He was about as thriving as travelling basket and mat makers; but he had nothing to do with them. He was more decently born and brought up than the cattle-drovers who passed and repassed him in his wanderings; but they merely nodded to him. His stock was more valuable than that of pedlars; but they did not think so, and passed his cart with eyes straight ahead. He was such an unnatural colour to look at that the men of round-abouts and waxwork shows seemed gentlemen beside him; but he considered them low company and remained aloof. Among all these squatters and folks of the road the reddleman continually found himself; yet he was not of them. His occupation tended to isolate him, and isolated he was mostly seen to be.

★97★

As an islander myself I had the wish to discover how far the people of Bardsey were imbued with an 'island-complex' such as I have suffered from so fiercely all my life. In their reactions to a confined life should I see the reflections of the many moods, both black and golden, which I had experienced on Skokholm? I was willing

to learn from their psychological state how wise or otherwise I had been in playing so earnestly at Crusoe. I went to Bardsey, too, as the ambassador of those healthy young people who—because we on Skokholm seemed so obviously happy—had questioned me regarding their chances of getting out of their daily ruts in cities, and establishing somewhere, collectively, an island autonomy where modern luxuries should be exchanged for the freedom to think and do in the fresh air and to live by home-produced goods. I knew Bardsey supported a community which lived as near this way as any other I had heard of. I went to see for myself in the middle of the winter; first, for the reason that no one has studied the bird-life at that season, and, secondly, because both the movements of the birds and the moods of the islanders were certain to be more readily observed under the influence of the changeable winds and black skies of winter than in the quiet bliss of summer.

. . . In the gathering darkness the boat was cradled and drawn on rails up out of the sea. We made our way to where lights shone at intervals along the village street. Some went to the House-in-the-Valley (to translate the Welsh names of the farms), some to the House-on-the-Rock, some to the Little Hall, some to the House-in-the-Red-Ferns, some to the Farthest House, and we to the house called Cristin. I had swelled the population of twelve men (including the pastor and three lightkeepers), eight women, ten boys

and five girls, to a round three dozen. All spoke English, but most of them haltingly and with a soft Welshiness that pleased the ear. Already their warm smiles and greeting had made me feel pleasantly aware that I was among a gentle and intelligent people.

About the homes of the Bardsey folk there is nothing of the romantic squalor which pervades the small farms of North Wales. Far from it. First, a wonderful aroma of cooked goose, and then a modern interior with a cheerful coal fire, a brilliant paraffin lamp, a highly selective wireless set and books—a Welsh Bible, volumes of *Punch* and the *Argosy*, and a Catalogue of Welsh Books.

Next morning, looking back from the crown of the five hundred feet hill, I decided that nothing could be agriculturally more enchanting than the two hundred little green fields, most of them less than an acre in extent, which lie between the high street and the sea. The one road does not wander over the fertile lowland of Bardsey, wasting good ground. It climbs straight from the harbour to the foot of the mountain and there, running over hard rock, becomes a sharp dividing line between the rich lowland soil and the barren stony upland. Along it the farm-houses nestle in pairs, like mated birds. The eye grows pleased with this economical arrangement of the farms, the street and the fertile and infertile ground. The west wind, sweeping freshly out of the blue Atlantic, left houses becalmed in its effort to leap over the mountain. Bardsey's prosperity

is entirely linked up with the presence of this extraordinary hill. A pagan community would have idolized this mountain which so dominates the flat green pasture at its foot, worshipping its power to break the strength, on the west side, of the Atlantic gales, and on the other side, completely to screen off the cruel east winds sweeping in from Cardigan Bay. Wind is ever the enemy of the islander, on the land destroying his crops and tearing down his property, on the sea preventing him from crossing to market his produce. Hence, too, the wisdom of dividing the land with many hedges into small sheltered fields. Until the last change of population these fields were parcelled out among the farms in a manner as eccentric as ever pertained under strip cultivation, but now the fields of each farm are for the most part conveniently grouped near it.

. . . I now began to sound my host about his reasons for living in what most people would think a desolate spot. 'It is as good as any other', he affirmed. 'Some of us think we're missing important things, but I am really very happy. I like quietness, and I like the sea. Yes, I am indeed content.' In a little while, however, I got a more satisfying answer. The fun of being a Crusoe had never occurred to him. As a poor man he had come to the island for no other reason than to make money. 'The rent is very low, less than ten shillings an acre for land twice as fertile and sweet as on the mainland. The buildings are the best in Wales. There are no rates or taxes. And for every pound rent we pay we are entitled

to keep one sheep on the mountain. The big motor-boat is maintained by the estate; we only pay a share in its cost of upkeep, at the rate of three and sixpence for every pound of our rent. Yes, I am quite happy. There is good money at the lobstering in the summer. And you are obliged to save your earnings, for there is nowhere to spend them.' 'How long do you intend to live here?' 'I think all of us are saving money because one day we think we shall have enough to go and live in a larger place on the mainland. But even if I had enough I am not sure that I would go. I feel content and free from care here, and he is a dull fellow who knows not the right side of his bread and butter.' 'Why then did the last lot of people leave?' 'I suppose they were getting old and did not want to die away from their kin. And no doubt they had stored away a few pounds. Bardsey is a young man's island to-day. No one draws the pension here.'

. . . A carpenter had arrived with me, employed by sanction of the island government, which controlled a special fund levied for the purpose, to repair the cattle boat. He was white-haired and a man of parts who could lead a song and play the instrument common to Welsh homes, the harmonium, and while the gale blew it was pleasanter to be singing or telling a tale than to be rusting one's tools in the wind and rain outside. Hence he would pass one day in hospitality at the House-in-the-Valley, another at the House-in-the-Red-Ferns, a third at Cristin, and so on to the Farthest House. Wherever

he went he had a good following to laugh at his tales (for he was a fisherman) or to swing into the chorus of an old Welsh song, begun by himself or from the loud-speaker tuned in to the Welsh programme. But even without this incentive the people of Cristin were for ever singing, as is the habit of Welsh folk, and since I did not know the words, I was as agreeably mystified and charmed as if they had been singing Russian folk songs. They were careful to practise their tonic-sol-fa each evening, so that the youngest might do himself credit first at chapel and last, perhaps, at the eisteddfod. But to hear the whole island in song you must go to evening chapel, which is no hardship, for there is no collection, and the little children stand up beneath the pulpit and say your prayers very prettily for you, and it has to be over and done with quickly because the youngest must be in bed early.

★98★

This is the world; would you and I were out on't; for, sure, we were not made to live in it. Do you remember Arme and the little house there? Shall we go thither? that's next to being out of the world. There we might live like Baucis and Philemon, grow old together in our little cottage, and for our charity to some shipwrecked strangers obtain the blessing of dying both at the same time. How idly I talk; 'tis because the story

pleases me—none in Ovid so much. I remember I cried when I read it. Methought they were the perfectest characters of a contented marriage, where piety and love were all their wealth, and in their poverty feasted the gods when rich men shut them out.

★99★

I can remember very well her coming in to me, late at night (eleven or so), with her *first loaf*, looking mere triumphant and quizzical gaiety: 'See!' The loaf was excellent, only the crust a little burnt; and she compared herself to Cellini and his *Perseus*, of whom we had been reading. From that hour we never wanted excellent bread. In fact, the saving charm of her life at Craigenputtock, which to another young lady of her years might have been so gloomy and vacant, was that of conquering the innumerable Practical Problems that had arisen for her there;—all of which, I think, she triumphantly mastered. Dairy, poultry-yard, piggery; I remember one exquisite pig, which we called *Fixie* (*Quintus Fixlein* of Jean Paul), and such a little ham of it as could not be equalled. Her cow gave twenty-four quarts of milk daily in the two or three best months of summer; and such cream, and such butter (though oh, she had such a problem with that; owing to a bitter herb among the grass, not known of till long after by my heroic Darling, and she triumphed over that too!)

That of milking with her own little hand, I think, could never have been *necessary* even by accident (plenty of milkmaids within call), and I conclude must have had a spice of frolic or *adventure* in it, for which she had abundant spirit. Perfection of housekeeping was her clear and speedy attainment in that new scene. Strange how she made the Desert blossom for herself and me there; what a fairy palace she had made of that wild moorland home of the poor man! In my life I have seen no human intelligence that so genuinely pervaded every fibre of the human existence it belonged to. From the baking of a loaf, or the darning of a stocking, up to comporting herself in the highest scenes, or most intricate emergencies, all was insight, veracity, graceful success.

★ 100 ★

Let us not be grudging, or falsely modest, about the graces of this island. We are the luckiest of races in our surroundings, whatever we may think of our destiny in other respects. We can love Nature without being abashed or archaic. We come after generation on generation of Englishmen in every rank of birth and ability who have shown us the way. Such a profusion of estates and farms and cottages and commons and field paths was never given us without a deep and tranquil faith. So vast a range of prose and verse of natural piety was not the product of romantic eccentricity. So enchant-

ing an English garden was brought to book with a certainty of manly understanding. Our painters have failed to compete with the world-masters of myth and allegory—but they did not waste time, while they sat in ten thousand leafy look-outs and caught the warm shower stealing and giving odours on the sunny labyrinths, or the last messages of light between the village walls and the summer sun. Our shepherds never doubted, as they shifted their hurdles or came to the fair, that earth had something of heaven in it. Our naturalists have not been driven away from their endless scrutiny by any desperate conjecture that life should be more exciting. This is the country of Arthur Young and William Cobbett, of the poets of *Polyolbion* and *The Seasons*, of Cotman and de Wint, of White of Selborne and Harrison of Ightham, of Loudon and Paxton and Anne Pratt and Frank Buckland; the country of a nameless multitude who have spent their lives in making Nature their friend, and have not thrown a bridge across a stream or made a hovel for farm carts without an instinctive compact with their friend.

★ 101 ★

I do not know that I have seen a cottage so much like a doll's house as ours. An ugly one, too. But here in this haunted village, where even a hedgehog has his fancies, a little ugliness may often hide more comfort than dis-

pleasure. I hate the dainty cottage of modern nicety; the build of ours is far more to my mind. One is supposed to sigh, as though one should worship, when the door is opened and one beholds a jade carving. I would prefer to see a black bottle, that a poor man may at least become better acquainted with.

Only see our cottage as it is, my dear friends. A doll's house made of bricks that once were red, and now by the damp sea mists have lost their colour; martins' nests under the eaves, in which the birds twitter at night as if they tell God's secrets. A half acre of grassy garden, the sound of trains when the wind is in the north, and the buzzing of inquisitive gnats is all we have to boast of.

Anyone can look into our garden; we do not hide ourselves behind bulrushes. But no one cares to, for there are no sweets to see. Though a week or two ago, and for three days too, there was something even in our garden to look at. For a long while we did not plant our flower knot that we made a year or two ago. But after a thunderstorm when there was water to be had my wife planted a splendid geranium. I helped, too, and Susan, who is not yet two years old, watched, but in a reflective manner that boded no good. The next day this same Susan came with me to admire our new plant that already had a lovely red blossom.

The plot had been Susan's playground, where she could dig with her little wooden spade, casting the dust

of the earth into her hair with unlimited satisfaction. She stood with me and looked.

On the third day Susan approached the bed alone, as if she had a serious task to do, which indeed she had, for seizing the stem of the geranium she immediately pulled it up.

It is best to be born a nettle when a baby is about, or something at least in which it can take no sort of interest.

When the geranium was gone, our garden, I thought, was more at its ease, for to appear dull and untidy is an act of policy in these ungentle times. We are so very ordinary and common here, that even the bees look a little ashamed of their company when they take a sip of honey from the white clover.

Of course we are proud of our weeping ash, but we dare not hope that our weeping ash is proud of us. Though I think the pile of faggots that we have in the back garden really consider us as people of imagination because we have prepared for a cold winter, when I shall chop the firewood and wonder why I can never remember good poetry as I used to do.

If you look for sweet williams beside our door, you will only find bindweed, and in the garden you will only see haycocks where there should be potatoes.

When the grass is cut I make the haycocks, and can hide behind one of them so that I am not noticed from the road. But all things tend to their end, and even the finest haycock will settle at last into the earth. So that

when November comes a little heap of sodden grass is all that remains. I suppose I ought to be more tidy, but one is as one is made to be.

A home is sweet to childhood, and sweet to age. I like to see the same fields each day. Even the very plainness of our cottage attracts me the more to it. I do not care to roam as I used to do over the far hills. My horizon is closing in. I now find myself more pleasantly diverted sitting at my ease under the ash tree than stepping briskly in a wanton manner over the high downs. The tide is at the ebb and I draw to home. Gentle Pan is my guide and comforter, for this god can pipe and dance as well in our little corner as upon a mount in Samos.

I have more pleasure now in carrying water to the stupid hens and to bold cock Richard than I used to have in viewing the West Bay and the Solent from our highest hill.

A tiny midget runs over my page. It is tormented by my pen. I cease to write.

★ 102 ★

On such a day of silence and desolation a remembrance of the late summer has come back suddenly like a lightning-flash to my mind, with such startling vividness as to affect me powerfully. A vision of the vanished insect life that a little while ago covered these green

flowering hills. I moved and had my being amid that life as in a golden mist spread over the earth; my ears were full of the noise of innumerable fine small voices blending into one voice; wheresoever I looked their minute swift-moving bodies appeared as thin dark lines on the air and over the green surface. Forms so infinitely varied, yet so wonderfully fashioned, each aglow with its complete separate life, and all in harmony with all life and all nature, responsive in a million secret springs to each and every external influence; so well balanced in their numerous parts and perfect in their equipment, so intense in their lives as to seem fitted to endure for ever. And now in so short a time, in a single day and night as it seems, it is all over, the feast and fairy-dance of life; the myriads of shining gem-like bodies turned to dead dust, the countless multitude of brilliant little individual souls dissipated into thin air and blown whithersoever the wind blows!

★103★

It was when the madness for enclosure raged most furiously. I used to go around a little common, called Horton Heath on a Sunday. I found the husbands at home. The Common contained about 150 acres; and I found round the skirts of it, and near to the skirts, about thirty cottages and gardens, the latter chiefly encroachments on the common, which was waste (as it

was called) in a manor of which the Bishop was the lord. I took down the names of all the cottagers, the number and ages of their children, and number of their cows, heifers, calves, ewes, pigs, geese, ducks, fowls and stalls of bees; the extent of their little bits of ground, the worth of what was growing, the number of apple trees, of the black-cherry trees, called by them 'merries', which was a great article in that part of Hampshire. I have lost my paper, and, therefore, I cannot speak positively as to any one point; but I remember 125 or thirty-five stalls of bees, worth at that time ten shillings a stall, at least. Cows there were about fifteen, besides heifers and calves; about sixty pigs great and small; and not less than 500 head of poultry! The cattle and sheep of the neighbouring farmers grazed the common all the while besides. The bees alone were worth more annually than the common, if it had been enclosed, would have let for, deducting the expense of fences. The farmers used the common for their purposes; and my calculation was, that the cottagers produced from their little bits, in food, for themselves, and in things to be sold at market, more than any neighbouring farm of 200 acres! The cottagers consisted, fathers, mothers and children, grandfathers, grandmothers and grandchildren, of more than two hundred persons!

I learnt to hate a system that could lead English gentlemen to disregard matters like these! That could induce them to tear up 'wastes' and sweep away occu-

piers like those I have described! Wastes indeed! Give a dog an ill name. Was Horton Heath a waste? Was it a 'waste' when a hundred, perhaps, of healthy boys and girls were playing there of a Sunday, instead of creeping about covered with filth in the alleys of a town?

★104★

It was not legislation but the village shop, which gradually extinguished the cottage factory. Only the poorest northern labourer of Eden's day found it cheaper to buy shop stuff than to manufacture it out of raw material. For a long time the balance of expense swung in the opposite direction. A few opulent farmers displayed on a Sunday or festival day the extravagances of shop coat and money buckles, but most villagers wore clothing of their own dyeing. . . . Yet the dress outfit of the village shop was not expensive, even if made up by the village tailor. Four yards of broadcloth for a coat cost ten shillings; 1½ yards for a waistcoat cost 3/6; a pair of leathern breeches, which lasted one year, 3/6; and the tailor's charge for making up these materials into a suit was only 5/-. A dowlas shirt cost 4/6; a pair of strong shoes 7/-; a hat fit to last three years 2/6; and a man's whole outfit could be purchased for under £2.

In the extreme north of Scotland the labourer's wardrobe could be annually replenished at even less expense than that of his English brother. . . . But he had

no necessity to spend his money thus as long as he possessed a wife and a few sheep. He did not even require money for procuring the machinery for manufacturing his clothing. Any fellow with moderate dexterity could cut what he wanted out of the nearest wood. In Eden's days the ancient beart or loom was still used for the weaving of broad gaiters and belts. It was, he thought, less injurious to health than its more modern substitute, over whose large beam a woman had to lean too far forward for his liking. The cuigel or distaff, on the other hand, could be worked from an elbow chair or low stool, by mere children, and was therefore also still employed. He had encountered old women in his walks abroad, spindle in hand, distaff in girdle, proving to his delight that

'Still froe the russet lap the spindle plays'.

Many a shepherd and cotter, with wife and children, appeared at kirk 'neat, tidy and even fine', in clothes which from the time the stuff of which they were made was sown in the flax ground, shorn from the sheep, or cut from the cow's hide, had been touched by no hand but their own.

When the ordinary sources of fuel failed, dried cow-dung was the substitute. A seaped shirt was washed with soap home made, generally of hog's dung; other garments with chamber ley. I doubt if in many parts where wages were still paid in kind, a coin was ever exchanged the whole year through for any *necessary* of life.

Every Highland peasant made out of his home-tanned leather, shoes of astonishing elegance and strength, sewn by himself with thongs of calf skin. . . .

I began this chapter with a description of the vast energy wasted in collecting the materials for dyeing wool. I will end it by showing how easily the Highland housewife dispensed with most of these so-called resources of civilization. Except the awl, needle, thimble, dyeing cauldron and a few bits of iron work for the weaving shed, all implements and materials were manufactured on the spot. Trees, shrubs and herbs furnished the various ingredients of the dye pot, and every want in life was supplied with those hands and feet which the English statute book some three centuries earlier had preferred to all the cunning contrivances of machinery. Truly there was a modicum of method in the madness of that machinery destroyer, Ned Ludd, and his poor deluded followers after all—only they, unlike most reformers, had come into the world a few centuries too late.

Even at the present time we can, if we journey up into the Highlands, see the cottage factory still in its perfection. Only the other day I asked my boatman in the Cromarty Firth if anything he wore was of home manufacture, and he astonished me when he replied that his blue tweed suit, cap, shirt, stockings and boots were all made during the silent night watches by himself and his dexterous spouse.

What he had forgotten was that there were a thousand young fir-trees to be planted in a neighbouring spot which had been cleared by the woodcutters, and that he had arranged to plant them with his own hands. He had a marvellous power of making trees grow. Although he would seem to shovel in the earth quite carelessly there was a sort of sympathy between himself and the fir, oak or beech that he was operating on; so that the roots took hold of the soil in a few days. When, on the other hand, any of the journeymen planted, although they seemed to go through an identically similar process, one quarter of the trees would die away during the ensuing August. Hence Winterbourne found delight in the work even when, as at present, he contracted to do it on portions of the woodland in which he had no personal interest. Marty, who turned her hand to anything, was usually the one who performed the part of keeping the trees in a perpendicular position whilst he threw in the mould.

The holes were already dug, and they set to work. Winterbourne's fingers were endowed with a gentle conjuror's touch in spreading the roots of each little tree, resulting in a sort of caress under which the delicate fibres all laid themselves out in their proper directions for growth. He put most of these roots towards the south-west; for, he said, in forty years' time when some great gale is blowing from that quarter, the

trees will require the strongest holdfast on that side to stand against it and not fall.

'How they sigh directly we put 'em upright, though while they are lying down they don't sigh at all,' said Marty.

'Do they?' said Giles. 'I've never noticed it.'

She erected one of the young pines into its hole, and held up her finger; the soft musical breathing instantly set in, which was not to cease night or day till the grown tree should be felled, probably long after the two planters should be felled themselves.

★ 106 ★

Now first, as I shut the door,
I was alone
In the new house; and the wind
Began to moan.

Old at once was the house,
And I was old;
My ears were teased with the dread
Of what was foretold.

Nights of storm, days of mist, without end;
Sad days when the sun
Shone in vain: old griefs and griefs
Not yet begun.

All was foretold me; naught
Could I foresee;
But I learned how the wind would sound
After these things should be.

★ 107 ★

I was born in September, and love it best of all the months. There is no heat, no hurry, no thirst and weariness in corn harvest as there is in the hay. If the season is late, as is usual with us, then mid-September sees the corn still standing in shock. The mornings come slowly. The earth is like a woman married and fading; she does not leap up with a laugh for the first fresh kiss of dawn, but slowly, quietly, unexpectantly lies watching the waking of each new day. The blue mist, like memory in the eyes of a neglected wife, never goes from the wooded hill, and only at noon creeps from the near hedges. There is no bird to put a song in the throat of the morning; only the crow's voice speaks during the day. Perhaps there is the regular breathing hush of the scythe—even the fretful jar of the mowing machine. But next day, in the morning, all is still again. The lying corn is wet, and when you have bound it, and lift the heavy sheaf to make the stook, the tresses of oats wreathe round each other and droop mournfully. . . .

When the poor, bleached sheaves are lifted out of

the hedge, a spray of nodding wild raspberries is disclosed, with belated berries ready to drop; among the damp grass lush blackberries may be discovered. Then one notices that the last bell hangs from the ragged spire of fox-glove. The talk is of people, an odd book; of one's hopes—and the future; of Canada, where work is strenuous, but not life; where the plains are wide, and one is not lapped in a soft valley, like an apple that falls in a secluded orchard. The mist steals over the face of the warm afternoon. The tying-up is all finished, and it only remains to rear up the fallen bundles into shocks. The sun sinks into a golden glow in the west. The gold turns to red, the red darkens, like a fire burning low, the sun disappears behind the bank of milky mist, purple like the pale bloom on blue plums, and we put on our coats and go home.

★ 108 ★

I find myself also wishing that Dr. Dixon had written one more chapter for us—a chapter containing a picture of a genuine old Craven homestead and its inmates, because no man could have done it so well. I have such a picture in my mind. It is almost half a century old. It is a picture of a sturdy, low thatched house, in which the first thing that attracted my child eyes was a wonderful bedstead of black oak, built up all round with oaken boards for curtains, panelled and carved, with a

door through which you went to find the piled-up feathers, shutting and bolting it after you, so that, if the burglars came, you could get ready for a fight. Then there was a settle of black oak, with a very old date on it, and a chair to match, of a discomfort equal to Calvin's chair in Geneva. A quaint old clock in the corner, with a face of brass on which there was a picture of the sun of such a rotund jollity that it has touched the original with lines of laughter to my mind through all these years. The great 'fleak' for the oatbread comes out next, and the flitches of beef and bacon hanging from the black beams. Then the flagged floor with fine sand for a carpet, and the great peat fire with its aromatic pungency; the rack against the wall with its splendid store of pewter plates, the great oaken dresser under it, and a carven 'kist' where, it was whispered, the old man kept his 'brass'. He was a man of the real old Craven breed. I used to think he could not speak in level tones, but must needs address you as if you stood at some distance, a habit caught, I suppose, from talking in the teeth of the wind which blows for ever across the Craven uplands. I use one of his words now and then, or a sentence when the humour takes me, and the Scandinavian maid who waits at our table is apt, I notice, to understand that better than the modern English; she tells my daughter some of the words are the same as they use in Denmark. His dress was but slightly altered from that of the peasants in Chaucer's time. He cut his grass with a sickle, and hated the French,

though he could not tell you why. It was the smouldering hate, no doubt, of 800 years, kept alive ever since the Conqueror laid Craven waste, so that the dead lay on the highways and in the houses unburied. His good wife saved a bit of the old yule-log, wrapped in white linen, to kindle the new withal, and would let no fire go out of the house during the days between 'owd and new Kersmas'. The old man believed fervently in witches and t'gy-trash. He belonged to the church at Bolton, and slept there in my time with great regularity. He was, in truth, as I think of him now and remember his queer ways, one third pagan, one third catholic, and the rest was little better than veneer—I imagine, dating from the Reformation. So he lived as his fathers had lived time out of all mind. They were there on the moor side—the warm side dipping well toward the meadows and woods in Earl Edwin's time; saw the Percies and Romillies and Clifford come and go, while they still held on eating their brown and oaten-bread and bacon, and drinking their milk and 'honey drink' and beer. They will last to the crack of doom. I was quite a boy when the old man's time came to die, and it comes back to me how 'he gave commandment concerning his bones', and would have everything done 'i' t'ould way'. I think, indeed, he had a dim idea that he would be there as a sort of silent spectator, and might be troubled if things went wrong. So he would have no wine and biscuit served at the funeral—'nea nut he'. They must brew plenty o' drink

and bake plenty o' spice cake and cut it thick, and hand it round at least three times, and everybody must eat and drink their fill. And I can remember how they decked his shroud very much as if Ophelia had been there to direct them. There were violets and pansies, columbines and daisies, sweet thyme, rosemary and rue, for that was the ancient way; and he must be laid away as he had lived, with all the old rites and observances about his dust. Then as they bore him to his burial along the green shadowy lanes to Bolton they sang old funeral chants Job might have written, and Jeremiah set to music, they were so shorn of all that sheds a new radiance on death and the grave.

★109★

The Frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind. The owlet's cry
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude, which suits
Abstruser musings: save that at my side
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.
'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill and wood,
This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the numberless goings on of life,

Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame
Lies on my low burnt fire, and quivers not;
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making it a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own mood interprets, everywhere
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought.

* * *

Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,
Fill up the interspersed vacancies
And momentary pauses of the thought!
My Babe so beautiful! It thrills my heart
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore
And in far other scenes! For I was rear'd
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.
But *thou*, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible

Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.
Great universal Teacher! he shall mould
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the Summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree, while the night thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall
Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of Frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

★ 110 ★

This morning as we sat at breakfast, thinking of our present subject, with our eyes fixed on a set of the British Poets, which stand us instead of a prospect, there came by the window, from a child's voice, a cry of 'Wallflowers'. There had just been a shower; sunshine had followed it, and the rain, the sun, the boy's voice and the flowers, came all so prettily together upon the subject we were thinking of, that, in taking one of his roots, we could not help fancying we had re-

ceived a present from Nature herself—with a penny for the bearer. There were thirty lumps of buds on this penny root; their beauty was yet to come, but the promise was there—the new life—the Spring—and the raindrops were on them, as if the sweet goddess had dipped her hand in some fountain, and sprinkled them for us by way of message, as who should say, 'April and I are coming'.

What a beautiful word is *Spring!* At least one fancies so, knowing the meaning of it, and being used to identify it with so many pleasant things. An Italian might find it harsh, and object to the Sp and the terminating consonant; but if he were a proper Italian—a man of fancy, the worthy countryman of Petrarch and Ariosto —we would convince him that the word was an excellent good word—crammed as full of beauty as a bud, and that S had the whistling of the brooks in it, p and r the force and roughness of whatsoever is animated and picturesque, ing the singing of the birds, and the whole word the suddenness and salience of all that is lively, sprouting, and new—Spring, Springtime, a Spring-green, a Spring of water, to Spring, Spring-alien, a word for a young man in old (that is, ever new) English poetry, which with many other words has gone out, because the youthfulness of our hearts has gone out—to come back with better times, and the nine-hundredth number of the work before us.

★ III ★

In glades where frost lies ambushed in the ferns,
In the low meadow dipping to the stream,
A luring light and subtle beauty burns,
And now I catch and now have lost that gleam.
The water sings, its crystal body curls
With welling music round the root and stone,
But a voice haunts there clear above the swirls,
And now I hear and now I miss that tone.

Spring, light of light, stay not so shyly far,
Maybe a dream, maybe a living truth;
Voice that was there, attend that sudden star,
And with one primal call say you are youth,
Or love, or some remembrance.—
Ah, that prayer
Answered would leave mere wood and water there.

★ 112 ★

The weather had made it possible for the crowd of visitors to go down and scatter itself over the beach, when the usual black cloud sprang up and soon burst on us in a furious tempest of wind and rain, sending the people flying back to the shelter of a large structure erected for such purposes against the cliff. It was a vast, barn-like place, open to the front, the roof supported by wooden columns, and here in a few minutes some three

or four hundred persons were gathered, mostly women and their girls, white and blue-eyed, with long wet golden hair hanging down their backs. Finding a vacant place on the bench, I sat down next to a large motherly-looking woman with a robust or dumpy blue-eyed girl about four or five years old on her lap. Most of the people were standing about in groups waiting for the storm to blow over, and presently I noticed my two wild-haired dark little girls moving about in the crowd. It was impossible not to see them, for they could not keep still a moment. They were here, there and everywhere, playing hide-and-seek and skipping and racing wherever they could find an opening, and by-and-by, taking hold of each other, they started dancing. It was a pretty spectacle, but most interesting to see was the effect produced on the other children, the hundred girls, big and little, the little ones especially, who had been standing there tired and impatient to get out to the sea, and who were now becoming more and more excited as they gazed, until, like children when listening to lively music, they began moving feet and hands and soon their whole bodies in time to the swift movements of the little dancers. At last, plucking up courage, first one, then another, joined them, and were caught as they came and whirled round and round in a manner quite new to them and which they appeared to find very delightful. By-and-by I observed that the little rosy-faced dumpy girl on my neighbour's knees was taking the infection; she was staring, her blue eyes

opened to their widest in wonder and delight. Then suddenly she began pleading, 'Oh, mummy, do let me go to the little girls—oh, do let me!' And her mother said 'No', because she was so little, and could never fly round like that, and so would fall and hurt herself and cry. But she pleaded still, and was ready to cry if refused, until the good anxious mother was compelled to release her; and down she slipped, and after standing still with her little arms and closed hands held up as if to collect herself before plunging into the new tremendous adventure, she rushed out towards the dancers. One of them saw her coming, and instantly quitting the child she was waltzing with flew to meet her, and catching her round the middle began spinning her about as if the solid little thing weighed no more than a feather. But it proved too much for her; very soon she came down and broke into a loud cry, which brought her mother instantly to her, and she was picked up and taken back to the seat and held to the broad bosom and soothed with caresses and tender words until the sobs began to subside. Then, even before the tears were dry, her eyes were once more gazing at the tireless little dancers, taking on child after child as they came timidly forward to have a share in the fun, and once more she began to plead with her 'mummy', and would not be denied, for she was a most determined little Saxon, until getting her way she rushed out for a second trial. Again the little dancer saw her coming and flew to her like a bird to its mate, and clasping her laughed her

merry musical little laugh. It was her 'sudden glory', an infusion of pure delight in her power to infuse her own fire and boundless gaiety of soul into all these little blue-eyed rosy phlegmatic lumps of humanity.

★113★

Here I repos'd; but scarce well set
A grove descryed
Of stately height, whose branches met
And mixt on every side;
I enter'd, and, once in,
(Amaz'd to see't),
Found all was chang'd, and a new spring
Did all my senses greet.

The unthrift Sunne shot vitall gold
A thousand peeces,
And heaven its azure did unfold,
Chequer'd with snowie fleeces.
The aire was all in spice,
And every bush
A garland wore; thus fed my Eyes,
But all the Eare lay hush.

Only a little Fountain lent
Some use for Eares,
And on the dumbe shades language spent,
The musick of her teares;

I drew her neare, and found
The Cisterne full
Of divers stones, some bright and round,
Others ill-shap'd and dull.

The first (pray marke,) as quick as light
Danc'd through the floud;
But th' last, more heavy than the night,
Nail'd to the centre stood;
I wonder'd much, but tyr'd
At last with thought,
My restless Eye, that still desir'd,
As strange an object brought.

It was a banke of flowers, where I descried
(Though 'twas mid-day.)
Some fast asleepe, others broad-eyed
And taking in the ray;
Here musing long I heard
A rushing wind,
Which still increas'd, but whence it stirr'd,
No where I could not find.

I turn'd me round, and to each shade
Dispatch'd an Eye,
To see if any leafe had made
Least motion or reply;
But while I, list'ning, sought
My mind to ease
By knowing, where 'twas, or where not,
It whisper'd; Where I please.

★114★

The Country was yet naked and leafless; but English scenery is always verdant, and the sudden change in the temperature of the weather was surprising in its quickening effect upon the landscape.

It was inspiring and animating to witness this first awakening of spring; to feel its warm breath stealing over the senses; to see the moist mellow earth beginning to put forth the green sprout and the tender blade; and the trees and shrubs, in their reviving tints and bursting buds, giving the promise of returning foliage and flower. The cold snowdrop, that little borderer on the skirts of winter, was to be seen with its chaste white blossoms in the small gardens of the cottages. The bleating of the new-dropped lambs was faintly heard from the fields. The sparrow twittered about the thatched eaves and budding hedges; the robin threw a livelier note into his late querulous wintry strain; and the lark, springing up from the reeking bosom of the meadow, towered away into the bright fleecy cloud, pouring forth torrents of melody.

★115★

I was born in Bethnal Green, April 9th, 1855. . . . As time went on the close atmosphere told on my health and I was always ailing. At last the family doctor ad-

vised a change of air as the only chance of saving my life. My joy knew no bounds when I heard I was to go into the country. This was what I had longed for; I wanted to see the country I had heard so much about from my parents and had seen in pictures. I wanted to live in a country village, in a cottage with a thatched roof. I wanted to see cows in a real farmyard, not in a dirty place like the one at the back of our house. I wanted to play on clean ground, not on black ground such as our streets were made of. The longing for clean ground came to me through seeing my brother unpack his boots covered with yellow dust, and I remember as if it were only yesterday wondering whether all the roads were made up of dust like that on his boots, and the longing came over me to see those self-made roads. I would sit for hours by myself in my mother's bedroom making dolls' clothes out of a few pieces of material that a dressmaker gave me, but had no doll to put them on, till someone gave me a wooden Dutch doll. While I sat and worked I would wonder how long it would be before I could go to the country, and often made my mother cross with my worrying to know. It seemed such a long while to wait. But before I could go and stay with my aunt, I had to be properly clothed, and clothes cost money, which was always scarce in my family. I can only remember a new pair of boots, a grey cape and a new frock made out of the lining of a dress that had been given to my mother by a former mistress she had lived with before marriage. At last the

day came for me to go with my aunt. I had promised not to cry to come home when I got to my aunt's home. The idea of my crying to leave the country! Only let me get there, was my thought. Shall I ever forget the day when I left Bishopsgate Station, or the ride in the train? The excitement of the whole time is quite fresh in my memory, and the kiss from my mother, her anxious look at parting from me and her hope that the change would do as much for my health as the doctor anticipated, her instructions to my aunt regarding my health! At last we were off and I was on my way to the country that I had longed for! I had no idea how far we were going. I knew we were going to Cambridge and then, by a carrier's cart, to the village where my aunt lived. About half-way on the journey I was pushed under my aunt's crinoline and a man came to look at the tickets. I learnt years after that no ticket had been taken for me and that was why I had been hidden away, so I was a little stowaway, taken to the beautiful country by fraud. After we got to Cambridge, after some delay we started for the village and arrived there in the evening. The first thing that attracted my attention was the smoke curling up into the air out of the chimney of a cottage with a thatched roof, and the smell of burning wood was to me the most delightful scent that I had ever smelt. It had a real country smell, and even now, if I smell green wood burning, my mind carries me back to my first visit to the country. I have been to that village many times since and every time I get to

that spot I almost unconsciously look for the blue smoke from the old chimney and quite expect to smell burning wood.

I spent five weeks in the country and lived out-of-doors most of the time. My uncle was farm bailiff and lived in a cottage on the estate, but it did not have a thatched roof, so I did not get all I wanted. I spent a great deal of time with my uncle. I went with him to fetch the cows in and stayed to see them milked. They were so tame that I often had a ride on their backs, and in time I could make them come to me in the field if I called them. I used to go in a cart with my uncle when he went to fetch food for the cows and waited while the men cut down the clover and other food, and came home perched on the top of the load. I was at first very frightened of the bees, but when I was told that if I was frightened of the bees I should have to go back to London I soon got over my fright, or kept it to myself. In time I got used to the bees, and would wander around the hedges and would admire all the pretty wild flowers. There were some very fine trees just outside my aunt's window. The birds sang most delightfully in them, but the delight of my life was to watch the larks rise up out of a cornfield singing as if their throats would burst. The country was very flat but I remember what a lot of sky I could see and what delightful sunsets I could watch from the front of the house.

I wanted to go to school and asked my aunt to let me do so, but she said it was not worth while for a short

time. I realised then I was only staying for a short time. Before then I never thought I was going back to dirty Bethnal Green, but now I knew my time in the country was coming to an end. The thought of leaving my aunt and uncle and all the animals, the clean yellow ground and the freedom made me very unhappy. I cried a good deal at first, but it was no good; a friend of my aunt's was coming for a few days and she was going to take me back to London and deliver me up to my mother. How I disliked that person! I put all the blame on her for me having to return to London. Why did she want a holiday? I did feel unreasonable about it, and even now when I hear the name of Griffith my mind goes back to the time when Mary Griffith brought me back to London and the misery I felt when I saw the country receding and the town coming into sight.

★116★

Could I weed
Thy soul of care, by heavens, I would offer
All the bright riches of my crystal coffer
To Amphitrite; all my clear-eyed fish,
Golden, or rainbow-sided, or purplish,
Vermilion-tail'd, or finn'd with silvery gauze;
Yea, or my veined pebble-floor, that draws
A virgin light to the deep; my grotto-sands
Tawny and gold, ooz'd slowly from far lands

By my diligent springs; my level lillies, shells,
My charming rod, my potent river spells;
Yes, every thing, even to the pearly cup
Meander gave me,—for I bubbled up
To fainting creatures in a desert wild.
But woe is me, I am but as a child
To gladden thee; and all I dare to say,
Is, that I pity thee; that on this day
I've been thy guide; that thou must wander far
In other regions, past the scanty bar
To mortal steps, before thou cans't be ta'en
From every wasting sigh, from every pain,
Into the gentle bosom of thy love.
Why it is thus, one knows in heaven above:
But, a poor Naiad, I guess not. Farewell!
I have a ditty for my hollow cell.

★117★

The air was wine, the moist earth-smell wine, the lark's song, the wafts from the cowshed at the top of the field, the pant and smoke of a distant train—all were wine—or song, was it? or odour, this unity they all blent into? I had no words then to describe it, that earth-effluence of which I was so conscious; nor, indeed have I found words since. I ran sideways, shouting; I dug glad heels into the squelching soil; I splashed diamond showers from puddles with a stick; I hurled

clods skywards at random, and presently I somehow found myself singing. The words were mere nonsense —irresponsible babble; the tune was an improvisation, a weary, unrhythmic thing of rise and fall: and yet it seemed to me a genuine utterance, and just at that moment the one thing fitting and right and perfect. Humanity would have rejected it with scorn. Nature, everywhere singing in the same key, recognised and accepted it without a flicker of dissent.

★118★

'It's indoors, sir, as kills half the people; being indoors three parts of the day, and next to that taking too much drink and vittals. Eating's as bad as drinking; and there ain't nothing like fresh air and the smell of the woods. You should come out here in the spring, when the oak timber is throwed (because, you see, the sap be rising, and the bark strips then), and just sit down on a stick fresh peeled—I means a trunk, you know—and sniff up the scent of that there oak bark. It goes right down your throat, and preserves your lungs as the tan do leather. And I've heard say as folk who work in the tan-yards never have no illness. There's always a smell from trees, dead or living—I could tell what wood a log was in the dark by my nose; and the air is better where the woods be. The ladies up in the great house sometimes goes out into the fir plantations—the turpentine scents

strong, you see—and they say it's good for the chest; but, bless you, you must live in it. People go abroad, I'm told, to live in the pine forests to cure 'em: I say these here oaks have got every bit as much good in that way. I never eat but two meals a day—breakfast and supper: what you would call dinner—and maybe in the middle of the day a hunch of dry bread and an apple. I take a deal for breakfast, and I'm rather lear [hungry] at supper; but you may lay your oath that's why I'm what I am in the way of health. People stuffs their-selves, and by consequence it breaks out, you see. It's the same with cattle; they're overfed, tied up in stalls and stuffed, and never no exercise, and mostly oily food too. It stands to reason they must get bad; and that's the real cause of these here rinderpests and pleuro-pneumonia and what-nots. At least that's my notion. I'm in the woods all day, and never comes home till supper—'cept, of course, in breeding-time, to fetch the meal and stuff for the birds—so I gets the fresh air, you see; and the fresh air is the life, sir. There's the smell of the earth, too—'specially just as the plough turns it up—which is a fine thing; and the hedges and the grass are as sweet as sugar after a shower. Anything with a green leaf is the thing, depend upon it, if you want to live healthy. I never signed no pledge; and if a man asks me to take a glass of ale, I never says him no. But I ain't got no barrel at home; and all the time I've been in this here place, I've never been to a public. Gentlemen give me tips—of course they does; and

much obliged I be; but I takes it to my missus. Many's the time they've axed me to have a glass of champagne or brandy when we've had lunch under the hedge; but I says no, and would like a glass of beer best, which I gets, of course. No; when I drinks, I drinks ale: but most in general I drinks no strong liquor. Great coat!—cold weather! I never put no great coat on this thirty year. These here woods be as good as a topcoat in cold weather. Come off the open field with the east wind cutting into you, and get inside they firs and you'll feel warm in a minute.'

★119★

Felix Randal, the farrier, O he is dead then? my duty all ended,
Who have watched his mould of man, big-boned and hardy-handsome
Pining, pining, till time when reason rambled in it and some
Fatal four disorders, fleshed there, all contended?

Sickness broke him. Impatient he cursed at first, but mended
Being anointed and all; though a heavenlier heart began some
Months earlier, since I had our sweet reprieve and ransom
Tendered to him. Ah well, God rest him all road ever he offended!

This seeing the sick endears them to us, us too it endears.
My tongue had taught thee comfort, touch had quenched thy tears,
Thy tears that touched my heart, child, Felix, poor Felix Randal;

How far from then forethought of, all thy more boisterous years,
When thou at the random grim forge, powerful amidst peers,
Didst fettle for the great grey drayhorse his bright and battering sandal!

★120★

The last rays of the sun were shining in aslant, making a path of golden light along the stems and branches in its range, which, even as he looked, began to die away, yielding gently to the twilight that came creeping on. It was so very quiet that the soft and stealthy moss about the trunks of some old trees seemed to have grown out of the silence, and to be its proper offspring. Those other trees which were subdued by blasts of wind in winter time, had not quite tumbled down, but being caught by others, lay all bare and scathed across their leafy arms as if unwilling to disturb the general repose by the crash of their fall. Vistas of silence opened everywhere, into the heart and innermost re-

cesses of the wood; beginning with the likeness of an aisle, a cloister or a ruin open to the sky; then tangling off into a deep green rustling mystery, through which gnarled trunks and twisted boughs and ivy-covered stems and trembling leaves, and bark-stripped bodies of old trees stretched out at length, were faintly seen in beautiful confusion.

★121★

Walter, who worked in the wood making hurdles, she found in his shed of brushwood among the smooth trunks, chipping and splitting and tapping with his bill and hammer. When he paused a wood-pecker sounded like an echo of his industry. Age seemed not to affect his powers. If he had the rheumatism it had caught him in the bent position that was natural to his work. Beside him stood a stack of new hurdles, staringly bright; and before him a cleared space of the wood sprigged with dog's mercury and blue-bell. The wood was to him as to a wife her house, though it looked more like a temple; the smooth straight trunks in beautiful order receding and melting into the tops of others where they marched downhill. Walter kept the place spruce—so much underwood to be cut each year, ivy to be rooted out, and elder and bramble. Not but that these things were abolished from one spot to spring up in another; by September the big glistening shadow-grown blackberries would be eyeing him in scores.

When the rheumatism took him badly one summer, he lay in bed worrying about his wood. 'That'll be getting in a rare state.' Farmer Condor had said, 'If you was to take Walter out of his wood, I reckon he'd die.' So he was let stay there, making hurdles which his master sold at two pounds a score.

'Ah, Master Richard ought to be coming in May—the place'll be gay then.' He took no credit for the blue-bells; in fact he disliked them himself, their smell was 'faint' (he meant strong and insidious), it gave him the headache. 'I most allus have the headache in May.' But to gentry they were pleasing—they were 'gay', as the life of gentlefolk, he conceived, was 'gay'—fanciful. He was glad that that should be so, that they should have a purpose.

★122★

Elegance is very attractive to the young, and they take it most seriously; the sight of it works powerfully in the stirring and forming of a small fancy. Our great-grandmother of the trim thatched parsonage is still the impersonation of gentility for her descendants. Always perfect in her ways and habits, she looks watchfully, critically, upon the behaviour of the children round her and instils her principles of gracious deportment. They are scarcely those, perhaps, of the thatched parsonage of to-day; not there would a young granddaughter now sit over her darning or her hemming, intent

upon dealing with it in business-like style, and hear the voice of her grandmother in expostulation, silver-tinkling—'Not like that, dear, not so earnestly; you should *play* with it, dear, *play* with it!'—while she illustrates the right style of negligent grace with little easy flourishes of her own needle, lightly hovering over her ornamental scrap of white gossamer.

★123★

One of my greatest enjoyments when a child was in going out with the servants to the Calton, and waiting while the 'claes' bleached in the sun on the grassy slopes of the hill. The air was bright and fresh and pure. The lasses regarded these occasions as a sort of holiday. One or two of the children usually accompanied them. They sat together, and the servants told us their auld-warld stories; common enough in those days, but which have now, in a measure, been forgotten. 'Steam' and 'progress' have made the world much less youthful and joyous than it was then.

The women brought their work and their needles with them, and when they had told their stories, the children ran about the hill making bunches of wild flowers—including harebells and wild thyme. They ran after the butterflies and the bumbees, and made acquaintance in a small way with the beauties of nature. Then the servants opened their baskets of provisions,

and we had a delightful picnic. Though I am now writing about seventy years after the date of these events I can almost believe that I am enjoying the delightful perfume of the wild thyme and the fragrant plants and flowers, wafted around me by the warm breezes of the Calton hillside.

In these days I refer to, there was always a most cheerful and intimate intercourse kept up between the children and the servants. They were members of the same family, and were treated as such. The servants were for the most part country-bred—daughters of farm-servants or small farmers. They were fairly educated at their parish schools; they could read and write, and had an abundant store of old recollections. Many a pleasant crack we had with them as to their native places, their families, and all that was connected with them. They became lastingly attached to their masters and mistresses, as well as to the children. All this led to true attachment; and when they left us, for the most part to be married, we continued to keep up a correspondence with them, which lasted for many years.

★124★

As I sit there, under the tasselled branch of a larch that leans out from the edge of the shrubbery, I take in afresh the delightful sense of easy abundance, the loose comfort, the soft-bosomed maturity of the garden.

Those lobelia-stripes, those marigold-patches might look harsh and hard, you would think; one knows how smartly odious they can appear in a well-kept garden, so called, where the flowers seem to have been—what shall I say?—to have been stuffed and mounted, lest they should take their ease as living creatures. Not a flower could look constrained, unnaturally smartened, in the garden at Earlham; even if they sat up in rows and stripes, they did so with enjoyment unconcerned. They glowed, they revelled; and moreover it was not, in any vulgar sense, a well-kept garden. It was profusely inconsistent; if one flower-bed was stuck all over with geraniums like a pin-cushion and rimmed with horrible little monsters of fretted, empurpled foliage, the next might be a bower, a boscage, a ramp of sweet peas, a bushy luxuriance of phlox and rosemary. And especially the border against the slow curve of the wall which I mentioned just now—this was a mazy confusion of everything that gleams and glows and exhales a spicery of humming fragrance. Peacock butterflies, brilliant red admirals, fluttered over the blue mist of sea-lavender; a tree of verbena, the lemon-scented herb of which you pull a leaf whenever you pass, branched out close to the immense old trunk of the wistaria; salvia blue and red, bitter-sweet phloxes white and crimson-eyed, the russet and purple trumpets of the lovely creature afflicted with the name of salpiglossis, they all rejoiced together, rambling and crowding in liberal exuberance. The gardener might wreak his worst will,

scheming for a smart patchwork; but the free soul of the garden escaped him and bloomed tumultuously.

★125★

The direct way was steep and he liked the slow approach, which gave him a chance to look about the place and smell the new-mown hay. At this season the air was full of it—the fields were so near that it was in the clean, still streets. Nick would never have thought of rattling up to Mr. Carteret's door, which had on an old brass plate the proprietor's name, as if he had been the principal surgeon. The house was in the high part, and the neat roofs of other houses, lower down the hill, made an immediate prospect for it, scarcely counting, however, since the green country was just below these, familiar and interpenetrating, in the shape of small but thick-tufted gardens. Free garden-growths flourished in all the intervals, but the only disorder of the place was that there were sometimes oats on the pavements. A crooked lane, with postern doors and cobblestones, opened near Mr. Carteret's house and wandered toward the old abbey; for the abbey was the secondary fact of Beauclere—it came after Mr. Carteret. Mr. Carteret sometimes went away and the abbey never did; yet somehow what was most of the essence of the place was that it could boast of the resident in the squarest of the square red houses, the one with the finest of the

arched hall-windows, in three divisions, over the widest of the last-century doorways. You saw the great church from the doorstep, beyond gardens of course, and in the stillness you could hear the flutter of the birds that circled round its huge short towers. The towers had been finished only as time finishes things, by lending assurances to their lapses. There is something right in old monuments that have been wrong for centuries: some such moral as that was usually in Nick's mind as an emanation of Beauclere when he saw the grand line of the roof ride the sky and draw out its length.

When the door with the brass plate was opened and Mr. Chayter appeared in the middle distance—he always advanced just to the same spot, as a prime minister receives an ambassador—Nick felt anew that he would be wonderfully like Mr. Carteret if he had had an expression. He denied himself this freedom, never giving a sign of recognition, often as the young man had been at the house. He was most attentive to the visitor's wants, but apparently feared that if he allowed a familiarity it might go too far. There was always the same question to be asked—had Mr. Carteret finished his nap? He usually had not finished it, and this left Nick what he liked—time to smoke a cigarette in the garden or even to take before dinner a turn about the place. He observed now, every time he came, that Mr. Carteret's nap lasted a little longer. There was each year a little more strength to be gathered for the ceremony of

dinner: this was the principal symptom—almost the only one—that the clear-cheeked old gentleman gave of not being so fresh as of yore.

. . . Everything at Mr. Carteret's seemed to Nick on a larger scale than anywhere else—the tea-cups, the knives and forks, the door-handles, the chair-backs, the legs of mutton, the candles and the lumps of coal: they represented and apparently exhausted the master's sense of pleasing effect, for the house was not otherwise decorated. Nick thought it really hideous, but he was capable at any time of extracting a degree of amusement from anything strongly characteristic, and Mr. Carteret's interior expressed a whole view of life. Our young man was generous enough to find in it a hundred instructive intimations even while it came over him—as it always did at Beauclere—that this was the view he himself was expected to take. Nowhere were the boiled eggs at breakfast so big or in such big receptacles; his own shoes, arranged in his room, looked to him vaster there than at home. He went out into the garden and remembered what enormous strawberries they should have for dinner. In the house was a great deal of Landseer, of oil-cloth, or woodwork painted and 'grained'.

Finding there would be time before the evening meal or before Mr. Carteret was likely to see him he quitted the house and took a stroll toward the abbey. It covered acres of ground on the summit of the hill, and there were aspects in which its vast bulk reminded him

of the ark left high and dry upon Ararat. It was the image at least of a great wreck, of the indestructible vessel of a faith, washed up there by a storm centuries before. The injury of time added to this appearance—the infirmities round which, as he knew, the battle of restoration had begun to be fought. The cry had been raised to save the splendid pile, and the counter-cry by the purists, the sentimentalists, whatever they were, to save it from being saved. They were all exchanging compliments in the morning papers.

Nick sauntered about the church—it took a good while; he leaned against low things and looked up at it while he smoked another cigarette. It struck him as a great pity such a pile should be touched: so much of the past was buried there that it was like desecrating, like digging up a grave. Since the years were letting it down so gently why jostle the elbow of slow-fingering time? The fading afternoon was exquisitely pure; the place was empty; he heard nothing but the cries of several children, which sounded sweet, who were playing on the flatness of the very old tombs. . . .

All this would be a part of the suggestion of leisure that invariably descended upon him at Beauclere—the image of a sloping shore where the tide of time broke with a ripple too faint to be a warning. But there was another admonition almost equally sure to descend upon his spirit during a stroll in a summer hour about the grand abbey; to sink into it as the light lingered on the rough red walls and the local accent of the children

sounded soft in the churchyard. It was simply the sense of England—a sort of apprehended revelation of his country. The dim annals of the place were sensibly, heavily in the air—foundations bafflingly early, a great monastic life, wars of the Roses, with battles and blood in the streets, and then the long quietude of the respectable centuries, all corn-fields and magistrates and vicars—and these things were connected with an emotion that arose from the green country, the rich land so infinitely lived in, and laid on him a hand that was too ghostly to press and yet somehow too urgent to be light. It produced a throb he couldn't have spoken of, it was so deep, and that was half imagination and half responsibility. . . .

The great church was still open and he turned into it and wandered a little in the twilight that had gathered earlier there. The whole structure, with its immensity of height and distance, seemed to rest on tremendous facts—facts of achievement and endurance—and the huge Norman pillars to loom through the dimness like the ghosts of heroes. Nick was more struck with its thick earthly than with its fine spiritual reference, and he felt the oppression of his conscience as he walked slowly about. It was in his mind that nothing in life was really clear, all things were mingled and charged, . . . and as he went back to his old friend's he couldn't have said if he walked in gladness or in gloom.

★126★

The shepherd on the east hill could shout out lambing intelligence to the shepherd on the west hill, over the intervening town chimneys, without great inconvenience to his voice, so nearly did the steep pastures encroach upon the burghers' backyards. And at night it was possible to stand in the very midst of the town and hear from their native paddocks on the lower levels of greensward the mild lowing of the farmer's heifers, and the profound warm blowings of breath in which those creatures indulge. But the community which had jammed itself in the valley thus flanked formed a veritable town, with a real mayor and corporation, and a staple manufacture.

★127★

Once in the afternoon we stayed our boat, and I climbed to the top of the flood-bank and sat looking out over the wide fen; and I saw the long dykes run eastward; the far-off churches, the distant hazy hills. Then we passed a village, the thatched cottages with their white gables rising prettily from the blooming orchards, Ditton on its little hill; and the mean houses of Barnwell; and soon we were gliding up among the Backs, under the bridge of St. John's, by the willow-hung walks of Trinity, by the ivied walls and trim gardens of Clare, past the great white palace-front of

King's, and so by the brick gables and oriels of Queen's into the Newnham mill-pool.

It was like some enchanted town of palaces; and I would not break the spell so we swung about and made no stay, and then slowly reversed the whole panorama again, through the long, still afternoon. I took the good day from the hands of God as a perfect gift.

★128★

It is said that, by laying an ear to the ground, a listener could hear the returning waggon as far off as Frimley Grove—two miles, perhaps, as the crow flies. This indeed indicates a countryside and a highroad lonelier than can be easily imagined in these days of motor-traction; at that quiet era, however, horse owners could recognise their own horses' hoof-beats a long way away. . . .

Rural beauty, in short, and sturdy rustic cheerfulness, must be in any mental image of old Farnborough, to be correct. The picture should have a touch of the romantic and the sequestered: above all, it should suggest peacefulness, centuries old—peacefulness, and a quietness scarcely conceivable now. In those days there were no motors, no air-machines, no trains. I don't know how far the sound of threshing carried, from a barn. But I do know that the beat of horse hoofs in the distance, or the cries of a ploughman at work, or

the far-off baying of a dog, cannot be called 'noises', any more than the humming of bees can; yet there was nothing else to disturb the quiet of Farnborough. Nor is it safe to say that men like the farmers and peasants of England did not care for all this serenity and stillness that grew up with their labours. Unawares, I think, their spirits absorbed it. I have been told that William Smith avoided Aldershot for the few years of his life after the Camp had broken up the silent heaths there. He never went near the place.

★129★

An agricultural district, like a little kingdom, has its own capital city. The district itself is as well defined as if a frontier line had been marked out around it, with sentinels and barriers across the roads, and special tolls and duties. Yet an ordinary traveller, upon approaching, fails to perceive the difference, and may, perhaps, drive right through the territory without knowing it. The fields roll on and rise into the hills, the hills sink again into a plain, just the same as elsewhere; there are cornfields and meadows; villages and farmsteads, and no visible boundary. Nor is it recognised upon the map. It does not fit into any political or legal limit; it is neither a county, half a county, a hundred, or police division. But to the farmer it is a distinct land. If he comes from a distance he will at once notice little peculiari-

ties in the fields, the crops, the stock, or customs, and will immediately inquire if it be not such and such a place that he has heard of. If he resides within thirty miles or so he will ever since boyhood have heard 'the uplands' talked of as if it were a separate country, as distinct as France. Cattle from the uplands, sheep, horses, labourers, corn, or hay, or anything and anybody from thence, he has grown accustomed to regard almost as foreign.

There is good reason, from an agricultural point of view, for this. The district, with its capital city Fleeceborough, really is distinct, well marked and defined. The very soil and substrata are characteristic. The products are wheat and cattle and sheep, the same as elsewhere, but the proportions of each, the kind of sheep, the traditional methods and farm customs are separate and marked. The rotation of crops is different, the agreements are on a different basis, the very gates to the fields have peculiar fastenings, not used in other places. Instead of hedges, the fields, perhaps, are often divided by dry stone walls on which, when they have become old, curious plants may sometimes be found. For the flora, too, is distinct; you may find herbs here that do not exist a little way off, and on the other hand, search how you will, you will not discover one single specimen of a simple flower which strews the meadows elsewhere.

Here the very farmhouses are built upon a different plan, and with different materials; the barns are cov-

ered with old stone slates, instead of tiles or thatch. The people are a nation amongst themselves. Their accent is peculiar and easily recognised and they have their own folklore, their own household habits, particular dainties and way of life. The tenant farmers, the millers, the innkeepers and every Hodge within 'the uplands' (not by any means all hills)—in short, every one is a citizen of Fleeceborough. Hodge may tend his flock on distant pastures, may fodder his cattle in far-away meadows and dwell in little hamlets hardly heard of, but all the same he is a Fleeceborough man. It is his centre; thither he looks for everything.

The place is a little market town, the total of whose population in the census records sounds absurdly small; yet it is a complete world in itself; a capital city, with its kingdom and its ruler, for the territory is practically the property of a single family. . . .

When the tenant is stationary, the labourer is also. He stays in the same cottage on the same farm all his life, his descendants remain and work for the same tenant family. He can trace his descent in the locality for a hundred years. From time immemorial both Hodge and his immediate employers have looked towards Fleeceborough as their capital. Hodge goes in to the market in charge of his master's sheep, his wife trudges in for household necessaries, All the hamlet goes in to the annual fairs. Every cottager in the hamlet knows somebody in the town; the girls go there to service, the boys to get employment. The little village

shops obtain their goods from thence. All the produce —wheat, barley, oats, hay, cattle and sheep—is sent into the capital to the various markets held there. The very ideas held in the villages by the inhabitants come from Fleeceborough; the local papers published there are sold all round, and supply them with news, arguments and the politics of the little kingdom. The farmers look to Fleeceborough just as much or more. It is a religious duty to be seen there on market days. Not a man misses being there; if he is not visible, his circle note it, and guess at various explanations.

Each man has his own particular hostelry, where his father, and his grandfather, put up before him, and where he is expected to dine in the same old room, with the pictures of famous rams that have fetched fabulous prices, framed against the wall, and rams' horns of exceptional size and peculiar curve fixed up above the mantelpiece. Men come in in groups of two or three, as dinner time approaches, and chat about sheep and wool, and wool and sheep; but no one finally settles himself at the table till the chairman arrives. He is a stout, substantial farmer, who has dined there every market day for the last thirty or forty years.

Everybody has his own particular seat, which he is certain to find kept for him. The dinner itself is simple enough, the waiters perhaps still more simple, but the quality of the viands is beyond praise. The mutton is juicy and delicious, as it should be where the sheep is the very idol of all men's thoughts; the beef is short and

tender of grain; the vegetables, nothing can equal them, and they are all here, asparagus and all, in profusion. The landlord grows his own vegetables—every householder in Fleeceborough has an ample garden—and produces the fruit from his own orchards for the tarts. Ever and anon a waiter walks round with a can of ale and fills the glasses whether asked or not. Beef and mutton, vegetables and fruit tarts and ale are simple and plain fare, but when they are served in the best form, how will you surpass them? The real English cheese, the fresh salads, the exquisite butter—everything on the table is genuine, juicy, succulent and rich. Could such a dinner be found in London, how the folk would crowd thither! Finally comes the waiter with his two clean plates, the upper to receive the money, the lower to retain what is his. If you are a stranger and remember what you have been charged elsewhere in smoky cities for tough beef, stringy mutton, waxy potatoes, and the very bread black with smuts, you select half a sovereign and drop it on the upper plate. In the twinkling of an eye eight shillings are returned to you; the charge is a florin only.

They live well in Fleeceborough, as every fresh experience of the place will prove; they have plentiful food, and of the best quality; poultry abounds, for every residence having a great garden (many, too, have paddocks) keeps fowls; fresh eggs are common; as for vegetables and fruit, the abundance is not to be described. A veritable cornucopia—a horn of plenty—

seems to for ever pour a shower of these good things into their houses. And their ale! To the sight it is not tempting. It is thick, dark, a deep wine colour; a slight aroma rises from it like that which dwells in bonded warehouses. The first taste is not pleasing; but it induces a second and a third. By-and-by the flavour grows upon the palate; and now beware, for if a small quantity be thrown upon the fire it will blaze up with a blue flame like pure alcohol. That dark vinous-looking ale is full of the strength of malt and hops; it is the brandy of the barley. The unwary find their heads curiously queer before they have partaken, as it seems to them, of a couple of glasses. The very spirit and character of Fleeceborough is embodied in the ale; rich, strong, genuine. No one knows what English ale is till he has tried this.

After the market dinner the guests sit still—they do not hurry away to counter and desk; they rest awhile, and dwell as it were on the flavour of their food. There is a hum of pleasant talk, for each man is a right boon companion. The burden of that talk has been the same for generations—sheep and wool, wool and sheep.

★130★

Its squareness was the characteristic which most struck the eye in this antiquated borough, the borough of Casterbridge—at that time, recent as it was, untouched

by the faintest sprinkle of modernism. It was compact as a box of dominoes. It had no suburbs—in the ordinary sense. Country and town met at a mathematical line. . . . When Elizabeth-Jane opened the hinged casement, the mellow air brought in the feel of imminent autumn almost as distinctly as if she had been in the remotest hamlet. Casterbridge was the complement of the rural life around; not its urban opposite. Bees and butterflies in the cornfields at the top of the town, who desired to get to the meads at the bottom, took no circuitous course, but flew straight down High Street without any apparent consciousness that they were traversing strange latitudes. And in autumn airy spheres of thistledown floated into the same street, lodged upon the shop fronts, blew into drains; and innumerable tawny and yellow leaves skimmed along the pavement, and stole through people's doorways into their passages, with a hesitating scratch on the floor, like the skirts of timid visitors.

★131★

Until the present time the country town has been as strikingly characteristic of the country as the villages and farms and fields; as stimulating to the fancy, as suggestive of the sturdy rural life of England, as inseparable from England's romantic history. Veritable town, it has had nothing of London about it, but has

been town of the countryside of which it was the centre. Accordingly, every town has its own character, invariably English, but always distinctive. Stretched out, as a rule, along some main road, but thickening round the market-place, for generations its interests were parochial, local. Its prosperity hung on the seasons; foreign wars concerned it less than the disputes at the vestry, or than the election, or the fair; the corn crop, or the hops or fruit, mattered to it more than the price of Consols; and somehow, while the restricted but sufficient and simple life of the inhabitants impressed itself unconsciously upon the streets, the townsman as he traversed them breathed its influence unawares, and to this day one feels it. The customary High Street, glistening with reflected sunshine, has a charm beyond that which it derives constantly from the surrounding hills and valleys, and not dependent upon the fresh amplitude of air that enwraps the town so lovingly.

That the nearness of the open country contributes its effect of course is true. Very pleasant it is, as you walk about the old town, to glance through a gap between the houses—down some alley or back-way, or under the entrance to an inn-yard—and catch a glimpse of green hillside a mile away under a great vista of sky telling of far horizons. You look up; as likely as not a rook is sailing overhead. You listen; and if the street chances to be quiet you may hear a lark singing. From a street in my own native town I have watched a hawk

poised high in air; one spring day I heard, and looking up caught sight of, a passing cuckoo. Many birds are near at hand. Thrushes and blackbirds are melodious in the back gardens, swallows build under the eaves, now and again a wagtail comes down into the roadway. The summer evenings are vocal with the screaming of swifts; in the summer mornings, if you are up early enough, you may see rooks coolly walking in the streets as though they owned them. Pleasant odours come too. There are hours in June when the town is fragrant with the scent of new hay though you do not see the meadows where it is making. The passing manure-waggon is at worst only half disagreeable, because, after all, it makes you think of farms, and another day the same waggon may bring in for atonement the scent of hops, or of the newly opened heap of mangold. The occasional odour of weeds burning is far from offensive in the street; nor was it at one time offensive, I remember, but rather suggestive of leagues of hot summer weather, when for several days a whole town was perfumed with the penetrating smell of a vast heath-fire six or seven miles away. But, besides these chance reminders of rusticity, there is always the sky, there are always the clouds and the sense of plentiful breathing-room above and around the country town. As you perceive, the shops and dwelling-houses are but a thin screen, a flimsy and often beautiful scene-painting, hiding the open country but not really shutting it out. Rather they frame the sky, and set the imagination

dreaming of the fields over which it broods; and while they shut out the eyesores—the neglected farm, the squalid village, or the obtrusively new Cockney villas that too often disfigure the actual country—on the other hand they invite thoughts of the real beauty that lies beyond them. From out there behind the houses and across the valleys comes fancy of coppices full of primroses, hangers fringed with catkins, woodland hollows still open to the April sky, but soon to be curtained in with young leaves. There were never lovelier hedgerows, deeper meadows, more ample downs, or farms more peaceful, than those one is tempted to imagine from the High Street of a country town. . . .

At last, however, a great change is coming over the country town, and it is losing its character by reason of the changes progressing all round it. As was calmly stated the other day in the notice of a forthcoming book on the architecture of 'country cottages' (meaning 'week-end' villas and the like), residents hailing from town are beginning to oust the former population of the land, and already in our High Streets one sees the result. The old individual character is going, something aped from the Bon Marche at Brixton is coming instead; the towns begin to resemble one another, and are as countrified as Wimbledon or Blackheath. And so, too, the character of the townsman is changing. He knows little more of the country than his new customers, and, like them, looks to London for his ideal. The very traffic of the streets betrays a subtle altera-

tion, with the old homeliness disappearing and a flashy smartness taking its place.

The change, however, has not yet gone so far but one may still see samples, and many of them, of the life that made our country towns so picturesque, and has left them so impressive. There are the weekly markets, in themselves a subject for many papers such as this; and, better still, there are the folk who come in to the markets. But leaving all these aside, many things of ordinary occurrence still mark the old towns as deserving the epithet 'country'. I am writing in late April, and the spoils of the coppices are making their way into the streets. I do not mean particularly—though they are significant and touching—the tight and drooping little nosegays of primroses and daisies which the schoolchildren bring as offerings to their teachers, but I am thinking rather of certain saleable commodities that are evidence of woodland industries in the neighbourhood. A cart slowly creeps along the street, stopping here and there to deliver bundles of peasticks for town gardens; another is bringing the long, limp strips of waste from hoop-making, good for kindling fires. I saw, only to-day, a diminutive and ramshackle old van, in which lay a score or two of ash-poles forked at the top, for props to clothes-lines. These were being hawked from door to door by two women, who also had strings of clean new clothes-pegs to offer to their customers. A young loutish man was minding the shaggy horses—a man as shifty-looking as the women who were con-

ducting the business; and, though the name on their vehicle was illegible, anyone who knew the district might guess tolerably well from what remote woodland quarter these folk had ventured in, making just that shy use of the town that their poaching, smuggling, but seldom hard-working forefathers had been wont to make generations ago. At this time of year, too, the pink stalks of rhubarb are pleasantly conspicuous in the donkey-carts by which village gardeners convey their vegetables to the townspeople.

Other seasons, of course, are marked by the passage of other country products. Cart-loads of green rye, great waggons piled up with new hay, loads of corn, timber on creaking carriages, hops (in my native town) and waggon-loads of village hop-pickers; but it seems untimely to speak of such things in the spring. Always, however, there are the milk-carts from outlying farms, the flour-vans and huge horses belonging to well-known and prosperous mills, the red ware from local potteries, and so on, coming into the town; and, going out of it, the farm implements, the oil-cake, the coal and coke, the deal boards, the grains that farmers have need of, and the hundred odds and ends distributed over the district by the recognized carriers. These things are visible, almost as of old, to show how essential a part of rural life the rural town has been, and must be still, though the changes going on all around it should half obliterate its time-honoured character. Here the harness-maker may continue to live long after motor-

traction has ruined him in London; and in quiet side-streets there will still be audible here the chinking hammerings from some smithy or shoeing forge, not quite forgetful of its earlier prosperity when the country was still country. That the ostler in the hotel yard will wear such an unsophisticated rustic smile as the fellow had whom I saw the other day, is, perhaps, too much to hope. Possibly he may—who knows? To consider that and cognate questions, one may profitably pause and examine the bills in the auctioneer's window, observing whether they advertise 'desirable building sites' too numerously, or whether the announcements of wool sales, farms to let, and auctions of underwood and poles still hold their own.

★132★

A railway bisects the common we cross. Everything is haggard and stale; the horizon is gone; and the spirit chafes and suffocates for lack of it. (But the gorse is in flower still.) Then the feet weary on gravel paths downhill. On either side are fields, edged by flaccid suburban grass, with an odour as of tombs—as though nothing fair could blossom in a soil that must be the sepulchre of many divinities. And again the pathway is dogged by houses, interrupting the fields.

Wens devoured market towns and villages; and shops devoured markets and fairs; and this, too, to the infinite injury of the most numerous classes of the people. All was looked for at shops; all was to be had by trafficking: scarcely anyone thought of providing for his own wants out of his own land and out of his own domestic means. To buy the thing, ready made, was the taste of the day: thousands, who were housekeepers, bought their dinners ready cooked: nothing was so common as to rent breasts for children to suck: a man actually advertised, in the London papers, to supply childless husbands with heirs! In this case, the articles were, of course, to be ready made.

Shopkeeping, merely as shopkeeping, is injurious to any community. The shop must be paid for; the shopkeeper must be kept; and the one must be paid for and the other must be kept by the consumer of the produce. When fairs were very frequent, shops were not needed. A manufacturer of shoes, of stockings, of hats, of almost anything that man wanted, could manufacture at home in an obscure hamlet, with cheap house-rent, good air, and plenty of room. He needed to pay no heavy rent for shop: and no disadvantages from confined situation: and, then, by attending three or four or five or six fairs in a year, he sold the work of his hands, unloaded with a heavy expense attending the keeping of a shop. Could not everyone see, in a minute,

how this exchanging of fairs and markets for shops created idlers and traffickers; created those locusts, called middlemen, who added to the value of nothing, who improved nothing, but who lived well out of the labour of the producer and the consumer.

★134★

On the other side of the wall behind the sitting-room fireplace lay the last room on the ground floor—a room much like the sitting-room itself—that is to say, with a window facing the street and so stretching ten or twelve feet back to double glass doors that opened (though I never saw them opened) upon the little shut-in orchard at the rear. But this, in my memory, was never anything but a little tranquil old-fashioned village shop. It had a pleasant odour of groceries, yet grocery was not all it held. In the window were delectable glass jars containing sweets—acid-drops, pear-drops—good to see even if one didn't come in for a small gift of these 'lollipops'. A string-bag, full of whitish halfpenny balls, hung from a ceiling rafter, alongside of the bunches of tallow candles and of brushes. But things to eat made up most of the stock-in-trade.

To get from the kitchen to the shop you had to go across under the sitting-room window to an opposite latch door—black-painted like the others—then through a three-foot lobby; and there you were, plump

in amongst the customers (if there were any)—and faced by a wooden counter, with scales, biscuit-tins, loaves and other odd things on it. This was on your left-hand, if you were a customer and walked straight in from the street. The street door beside the shop window—the door under the legend 'Susanna Smith, licensed to sell Tea, Coffee, Tobacco, Snuff, Vinegar and Soap'—would have it so; and the shopkeeper coming from her own sitting-room had to go down the length of her shop almost to the end before she could get in behind her own counter. But what a place to get to! What joy to explore those fascinating drawers! One drawer in particular I remember, because the caraway seed in it was so dainty and sweet-smelling, and the tiny scoop for the seed such a neat little toy of a thing.

Another toy by the way (or so I used it) was a diminutive coffee-mill. By standing on the old portable wooden steps—two steps—meant for enabling grown-up people to touch the ceiling, a child could just reach the coffee-mill. It was bolted or screwed to a post at the far end of the counter; a tin cup more than filled the 'hopper' of it with coffee beans; another tin, hung to the post by a string which had turned rich brown with the dust, received the grindings from the shoot. And nothing can express the satisfaction one had from the fragrance, the low sound of the grinding, the 'feel' as one turned the handle, and, perhaps, the virtuous sense of being at a useful grown-up task for once. On the floor, below the coffee-mill, was a bin to hold

flour; but the flour used to clog the scoop, which moreover was a big clumsy thing not to be compared to the scoop in the caraway-seed drawer. It had the same shape, and that was its one attraction. As a plaything it had no charm.

Was there anything else in the shop worth attention? I recall a bench opposite the counter, with butter, lard, bread, chunks of bacon—products, all of them, of the farm; and, by listening, I can almost cheat myself into a fancy that I have heard the shop-bell again on the street door and that a village customer has come in. But this is at least half a cheat. I have no real memory of these details. If they are worth recalling now, it is because, without doubt, their presence was helping to build up in me, with unnoticed touches, a feeling I should be very sorry to lose now—a feeling, however ridiculous, that in my childhood I looked upon England a hundred years ago and more, an England going strong then with vigorous country life.

★135★

Health, the greatest of all things, was provided for. Next, my being always at home was secured as far as possible; always with them to set an example of early rising, sobriety and application to something or other. Children will have some out-of-doors pursuits; and it was my duty to lead them to choose such as combined future utility with present innocence. Each his flower-

bed, little garden, plantation of trees; rabbits, dogs, asses, horses, pheasants and hares; hoes, spades, whips, guns; always some object of lively interest, and as much earnestness and bustle as if our living had solely depended on them.

In the meanwhile the book-learning crept in of its own accord. Children naturally want to be like their parents, and to do what they do; and as I was always writing or reading, mine naturally desired to do something in the same way. Fond of book-learning, and knowing well its powers, I naturally wished them to possess it too; but never did I impose it upon any one of them.

I accomplished my purpose indirectly. Health was secured by the deeply interesting and never-ending sports of the field and pleasures of the garden. Luckily these things were treated of in books and pictures in endless variety; so that, on wet days, in long evenings, these came into play. A large strong table in the middle of the room, their mother sitting at her work, used to be surrounded with them, the baby, if big enough, set up in a high chair. Here were inkstands, pens, pencils, india-rubber and paper, all in abundance, and everyone scrabbled about as he or she pleased. There were prints of animals of all sorts; books treating of them; others treating of gardening, of flowers, of husbandry, of hunting, coursing, shooting, fishing, planting, and, in short, of everything with regard to which we had something to do. One would be trying to imitate a bit of my

writing, another drawing the pictures of some of our horses and dogs, a third poking over Bewick's *Quadrupeds*, and picking out what he said about them; but our book of never-failing resource was the French *Maison Rustique*, which, it is said, was the book that first tempted Dusquesnois, the famous physician, in the reign of Louis XIV, to learn to read. And there was I, in my leisure moments, to join this inquisitive group, to read the French, and tell them what it meaned in English. When my business kept me away from the scrabbling-table, a petition often came, that I would go and talk with the group, and the bearer generally was the youngest, being the most likely to succeed.

To do the things I did, you must love your home yourself; to rear up children in this manner, you must live with them; you must make them, too, feel by your conduct, that you prefer this to any other mode of passing your time. . . .

I remember that, one year, I raised a prodigious crop of fine melons, under handglasses; and I learned how to do it from a gardening-book; or, at least, that book was necessary to remind me of the details. Having passed part of an evening in talking to the boys about getting this crop, 'Come', said I, 'now, let us read the book.' Then the book came forth, and to work we went, following very strictly the precepts of the book. I read the thing but once, but the eldest boy read it, perhaps twenty times over; and explained all about the matter to the others. There was a motive! Then he had to

tell the garden labourer what to do with the melons. Now, I will engage, that more was really learned by this single lesson, than would have been learned by spending at this son's age, a year at school, and he happy and delighted all the while. . . .

All the meddlings and teazings of friends, and, what was more serious, the pressing prayers of their anxious mother, about sending them to school, I withstood without the slightest effect on my resolution. 'Bless me, so tall, and not learned anything yet!' (a meddling woman friend would say of one of my sons). 'Oh, yes, he has,' I used to say, 'he has learned to ride, and hunt, and shoot, and fish, and look after cattle and sheep, and to work in the garden, and to feed his dogs, and to go from village to village in the dark.' This was the way I used to manage with troublesome customers of this sort. And how glad the children used to be when they got clear of such criticising people!

★136★

As soon as I could distinguish the heart of oak from the sap (it was not at first, for they had not taught me such accomplishments at school) I took to looking out, myself, the spokes to be used for every wheel that went from my shop, and at once the question of strength arose. At the back of the spoke was where strength was chiefly wanted; the front, 'the face', did not matter

half so much. In fact, a little sap was liked all up the face, because it would take a slightly better surface for painting, where painting showed. For all that it was the back of the spoke that was of chief importance. A little knot there—a little black knot no bigger than a pea —damned the whole thing. What I looked for was a length without flaw, which after being rounded up could be left at the full dimensions decided on. Nothing might be shaved away from the back. It was heart of oak, fit to last for ever. After thirty years or so, when hard wear had worn the wheel out, the spokes were still sound, and were taken out carefully. I sold thousands of them, at a penny a piece, for ladder rounds, but the better of them were set aside to be worked up again for smaller spokes or in barrow wheels. Then they might start another career of usefulness, for another twenty years or so. And still the oak continued good.

★137★

It is the fashion to speak of agriculture as requiring only unskilled labour. It seems to me that it is a very erroneous epithet. The man who knows minutely the habits and treatment of four or five different kinds of animals—horses, beasts, sheep, swine, poultry; who can hedge, ditch, thatch, thrash, mow, reap, plough a furrow, drive a drill, sow a field broadcast, as straight and true as though the line was chalked for him; this man

wants something more than mere thews and muscle; he must possess cleverness of the hand and eye; and the first-rate farm labourer is as truly skilled as the first-rate mechanic or artisan. I know that his skill is not worth as much in the labour market, but that depends upon other considerations. Now this kind of skill can only be picked up at an early age, when the imitative faculties are strong; and I have again and again heard old labourers accounting for the bungling work made by some novice in the craft, by saying, 'Ah, he never turned his hand to it till he got too old.' So that even if it were possible, I doubt whether it would be desirable with a view to the real interests of the peasant boy, to keep him at school till he was 14 or 15 years of age. But it is not possible. We must make up our minds to see the last of him, as far as the day school is concerned, at 10 or 11. We must frame our system of education upon this hypothesis; and I venture to maintain that it is quite possible to teach a child soundly and thoroughly, in a way that he shall not forget it, all that is necessary for him to possess in the shape of intellectual attainment by the time that he is 10 years old. If he has been properly looked after in the lower classes, he shall be able to spell correctly the words that he will ordinarily have to use; he shall read a common narrative—the paragraph in the newspaper that he cares to read—with sufficient ease to be a pleasure to himself and to convey information to listeners; if gone to live at a distance from home, he shall write his mother a letter

that shall be both legible and intelligible; he knows enough ciphering to make out, or test the correctness of, a common shop bill; if he hears talk of foreign countries he has some notion as to the part of the habitable globe in which they lie; and underlying all, and not without its influence, I trust, upon his life and conversation, he has acquaintance enough with the Holy Scriptures to follow the allusions and the arguments of a plain Saxon sermon, and a sufficient recollection of the truths taught him in his catechism, to know what are the duties required of him towards his Maker and his fellow man. I have no brighter view of the future or the possibilities of an English elementary education floating before my eyes than this. If I had ever dreamt more sanguine dreams before, what I have seen in the last six months would have effectually and for ever dissipated them.

★138★

The receptivity of the man's brain was what struck one. One pictured it pinked and patterned over with thousands of unsorted facts—legions of them jostling one another without apparent arrangement. Yet all were available to him; at will he could summon any one of them into his consciousness. A modern man would have had to stop and sift and compare them, and build theories and systems out of all that wealth of material. Not being modern, Bettesworth did not theorize; his

thoughts were like the dust-atoms seen in a sunbeam. But though he did not 'think', still a vast common-sense somehow or other flourished in him, and these manifold facts were its food.

★139★

A London worker who wished one future day to retire into the country, early in his career bought a plot of country ground and began to plant it with trees. He employed an old country labourer for the work and gave him precise instructions. They were accurately and honestly performed except in one particular. When he next visited the plot, the labourer met him and explained, 'You did tell me', he said, 'to plant the apple-trees here and the walnut-trees there; but I have planted the walnut-trees here and the apple-trees there. It did seem to me that some day, when you and me was gone, them walnut-trees would shade them apple-trees; and stop 'em bearing so well.'

★140★

'We shall have a population of city people, better fed and housed, I hope, than they are now, clever and quick and smart, living entirely by their heads, ready to turn out in a moment for use everything they know, but

knowing really very little, and not knowing it really very well. There will be fewer of the kind of people in whom I take pleasure, whom I like to regard as peculiarly English, and who are the products of the countryside; fellows who grow like vegetables, and, without knowing how, put on sense as they put on flesh, by an unconscious process of assimilation; who will stand for an hour at a time watching a horse or a pig, with stolid moon-faces as motionless as a pond; the sort of men that visitors from town imagine to be stupid because they take five minutes to answer a question, and then probably answer by asking another; but who have stored up in them a wealth of experience far too extensive and complicated for them ever to have taken account of it. They live by their instincts, not their brains; but their instincts are the slow deposit of long years of practical dealings with nature.

'That is the kind of man I like. And I like to live among them in the way I do—in a traditional relation which it never occurs to them to resent, any more than it does to me to abuse it. That sort of relation you can't create; it has to grow, and to be handed down from father to son. The new men who come on to the land never manage to establish it. They bring with them the isolation which is the product of cities. They have no idea of any tie except that of wages; the notion of neighbourliness they do not understand.

'And that reminds me of a curious thing. People go to town for society; but I have always found that there

is no real society except in the country. We may be stupid there, but we belong to a scheme of things which embodies the wisdom of generations. We meet not in drawing-rooms, but in the hunting-field, on the county-bench, at dinners of tenants' or farmers' associations. Our private business is intermixed with our public. Our occupation does not involve competition; and the daily performance of its duties we feel to be itself a kind of national service. That is an order of things which I understand and admire, as my fathers understood and admired it before me. And that is why I am a Tory; not because of any opinions I hold, but because that is my character.'

★141★

One sometimes hears from persons of the chillier type of culture the remark that plain country people do not appreciate the beauty of the country. This is an error rooted in the intellectual pride of mediocrity; and is one of the many examples of a truth in the idea that extremes meet. Thus, to appreciate the virtues of the mob one must either be on a level with it (as I am) or be really high up, like the saints. It is roughly the same with aesthetics; slang and rude dialect can be relished by a really literary taste, but not by a merely bookish taste. And when these cultivated cranks say that rustics do not talk of Nature in an appreciative way, they

really mean that they do not talk in a bookish way. They do not talk bookishly about clouds or stones, or pigs or slugs, or horses or anything you please. They talk piggishly about pigs; and sluggishly, I suppose, about slugs; and are refreshingly horsy about horses. They speak in a stony way of stones; they speak in a cloudy way of clouds; and this is surely the right way. And if by any chance a simple intelligent person from the country comes in contact with any aspect of Nature unfamiliar and arresting, such a person's comment is always worth remark. It is sometimes an epigram, and at worst it is never a quotation.

. . . A country girl I know in the county of Buckingham had never seen the sea in her life until the other day. When she was asked what she thought of it she said it was like cauliflowers. Now that is a piece of pure literature—vivid, entirely independent and original, and perfectly true. I had always been haunted with an analogous kinship which I could never locate; cabbages always remind me of the sea and the sea always reminds me of cabbages. It is partly, perhaps, the veined mingling of violet and green, as in the sea a purple that is almost dark red may mix with a green that is almost yellow, and still be the blue sea as a whole. But it is more the grand curves of the cabbage that curl over cavernously like waves, and it is partly again that dreamy repetition, as of a pattern, that made two great poets, Aeschylus and Shakespeare, use a word like 'multitudinous' of the ocean. But just where my fancy

halted the Buckinghamshire young woman rushed (so to speak) to my imaginative rescue. Cauliflowers are twenty times better than cabbages, for they show the wave breaking as well as curling, and the efflorescence of the branching foam, blind, bubbling and opaque. Moreover, the strong lines of life are suggested.

. . . The first essential of the merely bookish view of the sea is that it is boundless, and gives a sentiment of infinity. Now it is quite certain, I think, that the cauliflower simile was partly created by exactly the opposite impression, the impression of boundary and barrier. The girl thought of it as a field of vegetables, even as a yard of vegetables. The girl was right. The ocean only suggests infinity when you cannot see it; a sea mist may seem endless, but not a sea. So far from being vague and vanishing, the sea is the one hard straight line of Nature. It is the one plain limit; the only thing that God has made that really looks like a wall.

★142★

A plain country fellow is one that manures his ground well, but lets himself lie fallow and untilled. He has reason enough to do his business, and not enough to be idle or melancholy. He seems to have the judgment of Nebuchadnezzar: for his conversation is among beasts, and his talons none of the shortest, only he eats not grass, because he loves not sallets. His hand guides the

plough, and the plough his thoughts, and his ditch and landmark is the very mound of his meditations. He expostulates with his oxen very understandingly, and he speaks Gee and Ree better than English. His mind is not much distracted with objects: but if a good fat cow come in his way, he stands dumb and astonisht, and though his haste be never so great, will fix here half an hour's contemplation.

★143★

'A nice bunch o' bullicks ever I see,' observed Mr. Stubble, when the animals were driven into his yard.

'There ain't nowt amiss along o' none o' them,' agreed Reuben Argent, the stockman, after careful examination.

'I gotter fight f'r 'em wunnerful,' cried Mr. Stubble mournfully, wiping his brow with a massive red handkerchief. 'That ain't like at auction. If you ain't up agin th' ring, you may happen of a mite o' meat on y'r bones at a auction.'

'The trouble what we got', declared Mr. Argent thoughtfully, 'is if that don't rine. You git a dry summer, an' we 'on't have a mite o' feed f'r 'em. You wanter hire a few water meddies from Master Patch.'

'Happen I do, an' happen I don't,' grunted Mr. Stubble; the same bright thought had come to him a moment earlier.

★ ★ ★

Mr. Jethro Patch, whose land marches with Mr. Stubbles, duly noted the access of stock to his neighbour's yard.

'Seth Stubble'll be wantin' me water meddies, sure as th' dear Lord made little apples,' he observed to his wife.

'Wantin' ain't allus gettin',' she replied sourly, because since Mrs. Stubble is several years her junior, is well-favoured and does not squint, she has an unfair social advantage over Mrs. Patch.

★ ★ ★

'That's a fine arternoon, nyber,' remarked Mr. Stubble, in genial fashion, to Mr. Patch when they met a few weeks later on the Corn Exchange.

'I bin that busy I ain't hardly took no notice on't,' replied Mr. Patch.

'A little owd shower o' rine now, 'ouldn't be amiss, to my thinkin',' suggested Mr. Stubble.

'I ain't got a hot field on me land,' replied Mr. Patch.

'Come a wet summer I do wunnerful well,' declared Mr. Stubble, though the statement was one he would have repudiated indignantly had it been made by anybody else.

'Come wet, come dry, don't sinify nawthen to me,' boasted Mr. Patch. 'Telly f'r why. If that's wet I'm as well off as me nyber, an' if that's dry I got me water meddies.'

'I got a few acres o' rough stuff an' a drop o' water along of it,' declared Mr. Stubble with enthusiasm. 'Me bullicks like theirselves wunnerful there.'

'Bullicks is rum things,' observed Mr. Patch. 'Forever o' trouble an' expense an' they ain't fi'pence a pun on th' hoof. I don't think nawthen to 'em. I'd rather hiy me meddies than feed 'em.'

'Hiy,' replied Mr. Stubble contemptuously. 'If th' weather's all right an' you're lucky, you kin get within five shillin' a ton what it cost ye to make. You 'on't get nawthen f'r the grass.'

'Happen that's right,' admitted Mr. Patch. 'There ain't no bottom in hiy.'

'If I gotter lot o' water meddies,' pondered Mr. Stubble aloud and looking away from Mr. Patch, 'I'd feed 'em. Else I'd let 'em.'

'If you find a man want 'em f'r feed', remarked Mr. Patch equally impersonally, 'he mos'ly allus want ye to give 'em to him. Ast him a pound a acre, an' he'll say that's too much. You 'ouldn't think it, but that's true.'

'Happen he'd p'y fowerteen,' suggested Mr. Stubble.

'An' six shillin' tithe gotter come off o' it,' grunted Mr. Patch. 'A man what got water meddies better goo to th' workus at once.'

Mr. Stubble pondered.

'Bein' th' tithe's six shillin', you might ast a man sixteen 'haps,' he mused. 'I count he couldn't p'y no more. Telly f'r why. Bullicks is too dear an' beef's too cheap.'

'If anybody let grazin' as low as that', remarked Mr. Patch to a sample of wheat in a little bag, 'he'd be mos'ly bound to ast the man he let 'em to, to keep th' post an' rile fence in order.'

'I reckon', said Mr. Stubble to a poster on the wall, set up to advocate the use of a certain mineral dressing in the interests of a chemical combine, 'that if th' fence were good an' strong to start with, that 'ouldn't be onreasonable. But that'd have to be sound wi' a nice couple o' strands o' barbed wire.'

Mr. Patch ceased to contemplate the sample bag; Mr. Stubble removed his gaze from the praiseworthy record of nitrogenous fertilisers.

'Talkin' o' feed', said Mr. Stubble, 'I'll gi'e ye sixteen shillin' a acre f'r y'r water meddies, if so be you'll mend y'r fencin'.'

'They're wuth every penny of a pound,' replied Mr. Patch. 'Telly f'r why. They kin fat bullicks. They don't want no cake. You kin send 'em strite to th' butcher, an' they die kind. But bein' we're nybers an' I ain't feedin' them meself—'

Mr. Stubble jerked an eloquent elbow to the window from which one sees the glad sign 'Rose and Crown'.

'I don't mind if I do,' said Mr. Patch; 'jest a small one, an' thanky f'r me.'

★144★

It was five o'clock on a fine, crisp May morning when they set out to drive the tegs to the station, outwardly as calm and stolid as ever, but pulsing with an inward excitement that was quite new to them. They were both wearing their best corduroys and buskins and carried their savings and a few of the barest necessities, wrapped up in their spotted blue handkerchiefs, stowed away in their capacious coat-pockets. Their toilet was a simple affair and one suit of clothes was enough for them. Bob was so nervous that he clumsily drove two of the tegs into a muddy pond three miles along the road and the poor animals were so exhausted by the effort to clear themselves that they kept the whole flock back for the rest of the journey, so that they almost missed the train. Further on, a fast-driving trap threw them into a panic on the turnpike road and they rushed headlong into a field of turnips from which it took ten minutes to collect them again. Things of minor importance, perhaps, but wearing to the nerves. At last, however, they reached the market, where the flock passed out of their hands. A more desperate pair of runaways might have forsaken their charges on the spot, but neither of them thought of doing such a thing. The day's work must be finished first. By twelve o'clock they had seen the tegs sold at a very fair price and strolled away to a small inn near the market with quite a considerable cheque in Hiram's pocket.

'It'd sarve him right', said Bob, as they munched their bread and cheese in the taproom, 'if we got the money for that there cheque and took it with us. It fare to me, it wouldn't be as much as father owe us over and above our wages.'

Bob had grown very bitter and resentful in the past two months.

'Now, lookye here, Bob', said Hiram, 'we don't want nothing of that. Even if father haven't treated us proper, we're not going to leave this place as thieves, so don't you make no mistake.'

'Well, he wouldn't miss it,' Bob grumbled. 'And anyhow, what are we going to do with the money?'

'Wouldn't he miss it', said Hiram sarcastically, 'and what are we going to do but send it off by post afore we leave? Don't you make no mistake, Bob. 'Twouldn't be fair else.'

'No, I suppose it wouldn't,' said Bob slowly. 'Well, drink up, Hiram, and let's get a move on us.'

They emptied their glasses and after paying the score, walked briskly up to the post office. An envelope was laboriously addressed for the cheque, assiduously licked and the stamp affixed. The operation took a long time because neither of them was used to writing. It was an accomplishment they could have dispensed with altogether on the farm and Benjamin had only sent them to school because he could not help himself: he did not hold with education. At length it was done and Hiram slipped the envelope into the post-box, peer-

ing nervously into the opening to make sure it was there.

'I say, Bob', he said, 'don't you think now we're here, we might ask 'em how to get to Canada?'

'That's a good plan,' said Bob. 'Do you go in and ask.'

Hiram went in again and approached the girl behind the counter from whom he had bought the stamp.

'Excuse me, miss', he said, 'can you tell me how to get to Canada?'

The girl stared amazedly at him.

'Canada?' she stammered, 'I'm sure I don't know. I've never been there. Have you tried the station?'

'Ah, thanks, miss,' said Hiram. 'That's a real good idea and no mistake.'

The girl burst out laughing as he closed the door and rejoined his brother outside.

'She told me to try the station', said Hiram, 'and fare to me we'd better hurry up if we're to get started to-day.'

'You're right, Hiram,' said Bob.

Ten minutes later found them in the booking-hall of the station.

'Do you ask, Bob, this time,' said Hiram. 'I did it last time.'

'No, do you do it,' said Bob. 'You'd put it better'n I should.'

'All right,' said Hiram, poking his head through the trap-door of the booking-office. 'Can you tell me how to get to Canada, mister?'

The booking-clerk looked rather puzzled for a moment; then, his practical sense asserting itself, he frowned and said:

'You'll have to go to Liverpool first to get a boat.'

Hiram turned to Bob.

'We've got to go to Liverpool first,' he repeated.

'Well', answered Bob, 'let's go to Liverpool, Hiram.'

'How do you get to Liverpool, mister?' said Hiram turning to the booking-clerk again.

'Take the next train to Peterborough and change,' he replied irritably.

'Well, let's have two tickets to Liverpool, mister,' said Hiram. 'Two single third class.'

The clerk slapped two tickets down in front of him.

'It do fare an awful lot of money, mister,' said Hiram, carefully untying the string of the little leather bag that held his savings and taking out some sovereigns.

'Do you want the tickets or don't you?' snapped the clerk. 'You don't expect to get there for nothing, do you?'

'All right, mister,' said Hiram apologetically. 'Here you are.'

Half an hour later they were seated in opposite corners of a railway carriage, jogging slowly towards Peterborough through the placid landscapes of West Suffolk and staring out of the window with all the interest of schoolboys on holiday, and to men like them, unused to travelling, a train journey was as good as a

holiday. But they could not long forget what was for them the principal business of life as farm after farm unfolded itself before them: a farmer is perennially curious of the way other people farm.

'There's a rum 'un for you,' cried Bob excitedly, pointing to a piece of ploughland at the side of the line. 'The chap as did that was a jim and no mistake. Look at his hidland: he couldn't plough straight even when he had the hedge to go by.'

'No, that he couldn't,' said Hiram. 'That's a nice piece of winter wheat over there: that look well.'

'Not as well as ours, though,' said Bob proudly. 'My! Hiram, there's lambs for you. Did you ever see such poor little owd things?'

'He don't know how to feed 'em, he don't,' said Hiram, shaking his head ruefully. 'He's a bad farmer. Look at the rubbish in that field there; his turnips 'on't live long. Nice beans those.'

'Almost as good as ourn,' replied Bob grudgingly. 'But come to think of it, Hiram, hev you seen any land that look as forrard and well-kept as ourn?'

'No', said Hiram reflectively, 'I hev not: and what's more, I've not seen no horses that look as if they had a real good bait every morning like we give ours: you can tell by the way their coats look. And the cows too and the lambs. Fare to me they don't know how to feed their beasts in these parts.'

'No,' said Bob in a more subdued voice. 'Crakenhill is a tidy little farm and no mistake.'

They both abruptly stopped talking and the silence was not broken until after they had left Bury St. Edmunds behind them. The train was unusually empty and they still had the carriage to themselves, which was important, because they could speak their thoughts without restraint.

'I say', said Bob at length, 'how far is it to Liverpool, Hiram? Would you say it's further than from Saxmundham to Ipswich?'

'I couldn't tell you,' said Hiram, 'but I doubt it is.'

'Then it must be a terrible long way to Canada,' said Bob.

'Ay', said Hiram, with a stoical grin. 'I wonder where we shall sleep to-night?'

'I wonder,' said Bob, thoughtfully filling his pipe.

They had never spent a night away from home in their lives.

'I say', said Hiram suddenly, 'I wonder what'll become of those two teams of ourn. Best horses in the parish those.'

'They'll have to get two hired men', replied Bob, 'unless Harry and Ern give up the stock: but they aren't much good with the plough.'

'No, that they aren't,' said Hiram gloomily. 'I hope whoever get 'em 'll look after 'em proper. They're rare fine horses, they are, to plough.'

'That's the truth,' said Bob. 'But you know, Hiram, hired men 'on't work like we used to. There's a lot in using a plough, isn't there, Hiram?'

'Yes,' said Hiram stolidly, 'there is.'

'You've got to know how to set your hake', Bob continued earnestly, as if he were giving Hiram a lesson, 'and your share and your coulter, and how to keep your furrow straight. I wonder if they'll be able to do all that.'

Hiram sighed.

'Yes', he said, 'that summerland of ourn look a treat, don't it, so neat and reg'lar all over; and those clover ricks you and me built last summer—as trim as bee-hives, aren't they, Bob?'

'Yes, it's a tidy little farm and no mistake,' said Bob once more.

'It'd be a pity if that went down like after we'd gone,' said Hiram with another sigh.

'That it would,' said Bob, 'and I don't know as there's a man in the parish fit to work on that farm.'

'No, nor do I,' replied Hiram.

They sat and smoked in silence for a while. All their interest in the fields that flew past them had faded: they were both thinking of Crakenhill. Suddenly Bob looked up.

'I say', he said impulsively, 'let's go back, Hiram.'

Hiram nodded.

'P'r'aps it'd be better,' he replied.

At last, coming to an open spot we saw two cottages and two women and a boy standing talking by a gate, and of these people we asked the way to Priors Dean. They could not tell us. They knew it was not far away —a mile perhaps; but they had never been to it, nor seen it, and didn't well know the direction. The boy when asked shook his head. A middle-aged man was digging about thirty yards away, and to him one of the women now called, 'Can you tell them the way to Priors Dean?'

The man left off digging, straightened himself, and gazed steadily at us for some moments. He was of the usual type—nine of every ten farm labourers in this corner of Hampshire are of it—thinnish, of medium height, a pale, parchment face, rather large straightish nose, pale eyes with little speculation in them, shaved mouth and chin, and small side whiskers as our fathers wore them. The moustache has not yet been adopted by these conservatives. The one change they have made is, alas! in their dress—the rusty black coat for the smock frock.

When he had had his long gaze, he said 'Priors Dean?'

'Yes, Priors Dean,' repeated the woman, raising her voice.

He turned up two spadefuls of earth, then asked again, 'Priors Dean?'

'Priors Dean!' shouted the woman. 'Can't you tell 'em how to get to it?' Then she laughed. She had perhaps come from some other part of the country where minds are not quite so slow, and where the slow-minded person is treated as being deaf and shouted at.

Then, at last, he stuck his spade into the soil, and leaving it, slowly advanced to the gate and told us to follow a path which he pointed out, and when we got on the hill we would see Priors Dean before us.

⋆146⋆

So now we are caught. In the early hours it snowed, then thawed, then froze; and the moonlight imposed its glassy silence over the white and black uplands. Driving snow comes with broad day, and we keep in-a-door unless compelled forth by the Lares. Another night passes, and we wake to the staring light; but then comes rain, and the whiteness departs. The country is coffined up in a leaden desolate cloud. And yet, without rhyme or reason, we act on an impulse; a passion for revisiting one of the noblest churches that the Tudor wool-merchants built seizes one of us, and we leave the fireside and face the high wind. Evening comes hurrying against us too, and when we reach the church the doors are not unnaturally found locked. But this church is one that has a full-blown sexton—and he has not missed the arrival of his prey. You

would see the church, but he prefers that you should hear it. In spite of his rhetoric, we rejoice as we creep into the dimness which even enriches the majesty of this long and lofty act of faith. In the chapel, along the panels, in the black letter, are poems by one whom our Stentor commends heartily as the 'star monk' of his day. This chapel, we are informed—and, as it chances, the church historian among us is informed with special insistency—is 'to commemorate all the archangels, including Saint Cecilia'. Here we are aware of bodiless intelligences, perhaps—some inhabitants not on the roll of electors—some movement which is not in the pseudo-Chinese clock of eighteenth century origin; and we would sit and brood without a sound as shadows ourselves on this stone bench that runs round the whole cell. But it is not to be. 'Them symblems,' iterates the guardian, 'them symblems . . .' It is a capital new word. We yield; he has run off his story, and is herding us to a cold little door like that in *Christabel*. As he opens it, he frightens—was it Saint Cecilia?—away from the loitering church historian with the hearty, but final declaration: 'I'm very proud of this Chapel—and so's the parish.' I am reminded of another sexton not many miles away, who once—it was after a cricket match—conducted me privately into his church, by way of the 'Five Tuns'. He had been celebrating his usual score of thirty or forty runs, and so had I. He approached the altar. 'You know,' he said, taking from his mouth the almost

finished cigarette, and extinguishing it beneath his heel on the mosaic floor, 'we're very Low Church here.'

⋆147⋆

There was no fear of our laying too long in bed this morning. We were soon up, and soon on horseback; eager for the enjoyment of the Welsh scenery. Our hostess, tho' drunk over night, was very civil this morning, regretting the noise of her house and our inconvenience. Turnpikes are now set up in the country, but I can't imagine (the travell being so small) who repair'd, or does maintain the roads; unless it be by a county sess, for the journeying of the judges. From Llanvair we continued the same beautiful vallies for many miles, thro' roads, steep, stoney and narrow; the woods on each side are daily diminishing by the greedy intrusion of the plough. In six or seven miles having pass'd the village of Llyssin, and cross'd the stream there, we began to ascend a bolder and mountainous country, where the streams are very rapid and form a multitude of waterfalls; particularly at a mill near Cans Office there is a most happy assemblage of cascades and wood. We met numbers of people going to and returning from church, all on horseback, cleanly dress'd and civil; but could rarely make a question understood; by them we were advised to stop at the little village Mallwyd; where we found the neatest inn, and the civilest

and cheapest accommodations; with an attentive maid, and an active hostler. After we had fared excellently on salmon, veal and bacon, and gooseberry pudding, we walked forth to listen to a field-preacher, surrounded by a most attentive congregation: he seem'd abundantly eloquent, with so musical and so powerful a voice, as to make the neighbouring hills resound; and might have been heard at a mile's distance.

⋆148⋆

I could not but notice the more than ordinary air of bustle and importance of the coachman, who wore his hat a little on one side, and had a large bunch of Christmas green stuck in the buttonhole of his coat. He is always a personage full of mighty care and business, but he is particularly so during this season, having so many commissions to execute in consequence of the great interchange of presents. . . . Wherever an English stage coachman may be seen, he cannot be mistaken for one of any other craft or mystery.

He has commonly a broad, full face, curiously mottled with red, as if the blood had been forced by hard feeding into every vessel of the skin; he is swelled into jolly dimensions by frequent potations of malt liquors, and his bulk is still further increased by a multiplicity of coats, in which he is buried like a cauliflower, the upper one reaching to his heels. He wears

a broad-brimmed, low-crowned hat; a huge roll of coloured handkerchief about his neck, knowingly knotted and tucked in at the bosom; and has in summer-time a large bouquet of flowers in his buttonhole; the present, most probably, of some enamoured country lass. His waistcoat is commonly of some bright colour, striped; and his small-clothes extend far below the knees, to meet a pair of jockey boots which reach about halfway up his legs.

All this costume is maintained with much precision: he has a pride in having his clothes of excellent materials; and, notwithstanding the seeming grossness of his appearance, there is still discernible that neatness and propriety of person, which is almost inherent in an Englishman. He enjoys great consequence and consideration along the road; has frequent conferences with the village housewives, who look upon him as a man of great trust and dependence; and he seems to have a good understanding with every bright-eyed country lass. The moment he arrives where the horses are to be changed, he throws down the reins with something of an air, and abandons the cattle to the care of the ostler; his duty being merely to drive from one stage to another. When off the box, his hands are thrust in the pockets of his greatcoat, and he rolls about the inn-yard with an air of the most absolute lordliness. Here he is generally surrounded by an admiring throng of ostlers, stable-boys, shoe-blacks, and those numberless hangers-on that infest inns and

taverns, and run errands, and do all kinds of odd jobs, for the privilege of battening on the drippings of the kitchen and the leakage of the tap-room. These all look up to him as to an oracle; treasure up his cant phrases; echo his opinions about horses and other topics of jockey lore; and, above all, endeavour to imitate his air and carriage. Every ragamuffin that has a coat to his back thrusts his hands in the pockets, rolls in his gait, talks slang, and is an embryo Cockney.

⋆149⋆

The roads were so notoriously bad, even up to the last thirty years, that there was little communication between one village and another; if the produce of industry could be conveyed at stated times to the cloth market of the district, it was all that could be done. . . . Men hardly past middle life talk of the days of their youth, spent in this part of the country, when, during the winter months, they rode up to the saddle-girths in mud; when absolute business was the only reason for stirring beyond the precincts of home; and when that business was conducted under a pressure of difficulties which they themselves, borne along to Bradford market in a swift first-class carriage, can hardly believe to have been possible. For instance, one woollen manufacturer says that, not five and twenty years ago, he had to rise betimes to set off on a winter's morning in

order to be at Bradford with the great waggon-load of goods manufactured by his father; this load was packed over-night, but in the morning there was a great gathering around it, and flashing of lanterns, and examination of horses' feet, before the ponderous waggon got under way; and then someone had to go groping here and there, on hands and knees, and always sounding with a staff down the long, steep, slippery brow, to find where the horses might tread safely, until they reached the comparative easy-going of the deep-rutted main road. People went on horseback over the upland moors, following the tracks of the pack-horses that carried the parcels, baggages, or goods from one town to another, between which there did not happen to be a highway. But in winter, all such communication was impossible, by reason of the snow which lay long and late on the bleak high ground. . . . Isolated as the hill villages may be, they are in the world, compared with the loneliness of the grey ancestral houses to be seen here and there in the dense hollows of the moors.

★150★

Each night, when I came home and the lamps were lit, I unlocked the spice chest, pulled out the particular folder on which I was working and transcribed or calendared. . . .

The sweet and regular labour of it taught me what

school or university—though they laid the foundations of it—had never taught, a craft; to do one thing thoroughly without evasion or omission. It is a lesson learnt by most men who practise a handicraft in their own way, but seldom provided by the rather 'slap-dash' and desultory reading of modern literary education. Yet it is well worth attaining, for though it may not increase a man's moral stature, it tends to give him a sense of balance and of values, makes him love quality and shun shoddy, and teaches him to judge men and things by a proper valuation. . . .

The interest of slowly unfolding the course of one human life after another, with all its desires and aspirations, its joys and pathetic failures, was such that only a very dull man could have failed to be absorbed. And here were real lives that had once meant as much to their possessors as mine to me. One got a queer, almost god-like sense of being able to see the future of these long dead beings as well as the past, of being able to feel and yet to be unswayed by feeling, and with it a sense too of great humility, for even as one now beheld these, so might one also be seen and judged hereafter. Something of the quality—emotion recollected in tranquillity—which Wordsworth held to be the essential of poetry, was present in those silent hours of the night, looking over the shoulders of those far writers and tracing in equally transient shadow on the wall of one's own age the words they wrote.

		£	s.	d.
1578.	Item to Elias Facon to buy him a load of wood when he came from prison		3	0
1723.	Pd. James Sadler for Ten Loads of wood and stacking	4	3	4
	For beer when the wood was brought		3	4
1741.	Pd. John Alsop (master of work-house) his salary and 5/- for his building the Hogs cort	8	0	0
1742.	*April 6th.* Pd. Abraham Thurston for his daughter in the time of a salivation	1	0	0
1748.	Webb ill. Coffee to settle the nurses' heads and sugar			5½
1756.	*July 26th.* For a warrant to take up young disorderly persons		1	0
	Dec. 15th. Beer in carrying sweep's wife to the Pest House			3
1757.	*Feb. 17.* Pd. for mending ye boy Smith's breeches			4

		£	s.	d.
1762. May 8th.				
	Expended at Widow Barkers when we warned the soldier to leave the town			6
1771. Sept.				
	Gave the poor in Beef, Turf, Bread and money	15	2	8
1777. June 5th.				
	Lord Bradbrook came into the Workhouse			
1780. Feb. 11.				
	Bradbrook's child.		2	6
Feb. 15.				
	Paid Burial serves old Bradbrook		2	6
Feb. 19.				
	A pair of stokens Lady Bradbrook		1	3
March 9.				
	Lining a gound Lady Bradbrook		1	1½

⋆152⋆

The commonest sort [of straw-plait] was made by boys and children and paid for at the rate of fivepence a score [twenty yards]. It was quite usual for children to be made to plait a score between coming out of school and going to play. For troublesome and elaborate plaits women were often paid half a crown or three shillings a score and so were able to earn eighteen shil-

lings a week, while their husbands got only sixteen shillings a week as labourers. They had to buy the straw which they used, but this was not a heavy proportion of the cost. Thirty yards of fine plait or twenty-six of coarser quality went to make a hat. No doubt it is a craft which could well be revived with much advantage to many British farmers and cottagers, but it has been almost killed by Japanese plaits and coarse rye-straw imported from France.

These two letters from the Hertfordshire woman who made the plaits are so much better than anything else I can say about this graceful rural art that they may be added without apology.

'Sir,

I am sending you the patterns of Plait that you ask for trusting they will be what you want and as you would like them to be but I want you to take into consideration that it is quite 30 Years since I have done any but the Rustic for after the death of my Parents I went out to Service for some years as Cook and Cook-housekeeper and Workinghousekeeper and when I come home the only sort going was the Rustic but I know how to do it but when one goes from 4 to 11 it does seem as if one cant get along but all one wants is patients and I am like my Parents I always see my work done in my own mind before I begin and I don't think their is much to complain about but with more practise more perfection my Cousins house where you went

to ask if I lived their she is quite taken with the three Wave and now I think that is all I have to say hoping it is not so cold where you are as it is here now as to the cost of my time I dont think if I say 2/- and postage you can think it to much it aint the time it takes to do the Patterns but the time it takes to get ones fingers to a certain form as all are different make of work and the hand has to get a different form of movement.

Yours Faithfully

E— F—'

'I am sorry that I did not know that Mr. Davis had retired from farming but did not tell you about him to make a stupid of you all I knew was what Mr. Jeffs told me and I cant say how long it is ago for time flies so fast one is not always awear of its speed.'

The reply to my letter with the money:

'Sir,

I have know doubt by this time you are beginning to think me a very careless sort of person in keeping you so long with out an answear to your letter I received on Monday morning but when I tell you the cause you will understand and yow know we have had a very sharp spell of cold weather and Gardening was put in the back grounds but when the longed for change came one had to put in all their time and that with a will I have got my Beans, Peas, Carrots, and Parsnips in I was very pleased to hear that the Pattens where all that yow wished them to be and trusting that it may

be the right work in the right place thanking you very much for the Order.

Yours Faithfully,

E— F—'

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Broad beans are dibbled in ones or twos, peas in twos, threes or fours to each hole. In this work the dibble is short and with a heavier knob. It is used in the right hand, while the sower carries his seed in a bag at his waist and drops it into the holes with his left. To a practised man it seemed as though the right number of peas comes each time to his fingers, and yet, though right-handed, he cannot drop them in easily or in regular numbers with his right hand, or even with his left unless he is at the same time using the dibble with his right. This illustrates curiously the subconscious, almost instinctive mechanical skill which a constantly repeated process of this kind develops.

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It is by no means easy to tie a knot neatly and effectually in straw, and the younger generation of labourers are often impatient of the intractability of the stuff and prefer, when they can, to provide themselves with pieces of twine. Their fathers and mothers, having

learnt the old sheaf-knots almost in infancy, tie them with inimitable rapidity and deftness, though they are often unable to do it deliberately or in material other than straw and are nearly always totally incapable of explaining the process in words.

★155★

On a raw morning in November, amid our struggles to heave out of the ground a huge shrub we were transplanting, it was remarkable how strong Bettesworth seemed, because of the cunning use he made of every ounce of force in his experienced muscles. How to lift, and how to support a weight, were things he knew as excellently as some know how to drive a golf-ball. Nor was my theory quite so good as his experience, for showing where our skids and levers should be placed. It was Bettesworth who got them into the serviceable positions.

Something about those skids set us talking of other skidding work, and especially of the extremely tricky business of loading timber on a trolly. 'I see a carter once', said Bettesworth, 'get three big elm-trees up to a timber-carriage, with only hisself and the hosses. He put the runnin' chains on and all hisself.'

'And *that* takes some doing,' I said.

'Yes, a man got to understand the way 'tis done. . . . I never had much hand in timber-cartin' myself; but

this man . . . 'Twas over there on the Hog's Back, not far from Tongham Station. We all went out for to see'n do it—'cause 'twas in the dinner-time he come, and we never believed he'd do it single-handed. The farmer says to 'n, "You'll never get they up by yourself." "I dessay I shall," he says; and so he did, too. Three great elm-trees upon that one carriage. . . . Well, he had a four-hoss team, so that'll tell ye what 'twas. They *was* some hosses, too. Ordinary farm-hosses wouldn't ha' done it. But he only jest had to speak, and you'd see they watchin' him. . . . When he went forward, after he'd got the trees up, to see what sort of a road he'd got for gettin' out, they stood there with their heads stretched out and their ears for'ard. "Come on," he says, and *away* they went, *tearin'* away. Left great ruts in the road where the wheels went in—that'll show ye they got something to pull.'

We got our shrub a little further, Bettesworth grunting to a heavy lift; then, in answer to a question:

'No. None o' we helped 'n. We was only gone out to see'n do it. He never wanted no help. He didn't say much; only "Git back", or "Git up" to the hosses. When it comes to gettin' the last tree up, on top o' t'other two, I never thought he could ha' done it. But he got 'n up. And he was a oldish man, too: sixty, I dessay he was. But he jest spoke to the hosses. Never used no whip, 'xcept jest to guide 'em. Didn't the old farmer go on at his own men, too! "You dam fellers call yourselves carters," he says; "a man like that's

worth a dozen o' you.'' Well, they couldn't ha' done it. A dozen of 'em 'd ha' scrambled about, an' *then* not done it! Besides, their *hosses* wouldn't. But this feller—the old farmer says to 'n, ''I never believed you'd ha' done it.'' ''I thought most likely I should,'' he says. But he never had much to say.'

⋆156⋆

Now for the inward qualities of the mind, albe some writers reduce them into twelve heads, which indeed who-soever injoyeth cannot chuse but be very compleat in much perfection, yet I must draw them into many more branches. The first, and most especial whereof, is, that a skilfull Angler ought to bee a generall Scholler, and seene in all the liberall Sciences, as a Gramarian, to know how eyther to Write or discourse of his Art in true tearmes, eyther without affection or rudenesse. He should have sweetnesse of speech, to perswade, and intice other to delight in an exercise so much laudable. He should have strength of arguments, to defend, and maintaine his profession against enuy or slander. He should have knowledge in the Sunne, Moone, and Starres, that by their aspects he may guesse the seasonablenesse or unseasonablenesse of the weather, the breeding of stormes, and from what coasts the Winds are ever delivered. He should be a good knower of Countries, and well used to high wayes that

by taking the readiest paths to every Lake, Brooke, or River, his journeys may be more certaine, and lesse wearisome. He should have knowledge in proportions of all sorts, whether Circular, Square, or Diametricall, that when hee shall bee questioned of his diuernall progresses, he may give a Graphicall discription of the Angles, and Channels of Rivers, how they fall from their heads, and what compasses they fetch in their severall windings. He must also have the perfect Art of Numbring, that in the sounding of Lakes, or Rivers, he may know how many foot or inches each containeth, and by adding, subtracting, or multiplying the same, he may yield the reason of every River's swift or slow current. He would not be unskilful in Musique, that whensoever eyther melancholy, heaviness of thought, or the perturbation of his own fancies stirreth up sadnesse in him, he may remove the same with some godly Hymne or Antheme, of which David gives him ample examples. He must be of a well setled, and constant beliefe, to injoy the benefit of his expectation, for then to dispayre it were better never to put in practise: and he must ever thinke where the waters are pleasant, and likely, that there the Creator of all things hath stored up much of his plenty: and though your satisfaction be not as ready as your wishes, yet you must hope still, that with perseverance you shall reap the fulnesse of your Harvest: then he must be full of love, both to his pleasure, and to his neighbour: to his pleasure, which otherwise would be irksome, and te-

dious, and to his neighbour that he neither give offence in any particular, nor be guilty of any generall destruction: then he must be exceeding patient, and neyther vexe nor excruciate himselfe with losses or mischances, as in loosing the pray when it is almost in the hand, or by breaking his Tooles by ignorance or negligence, but with a pleased sufference amend errour, and thinke mischances instructions to better carefulnesse. He must then be full of humble thoughts, not disdayning when occasion commands to kneele, lye downe, or wet his feet or fingers, as oft as there is any advantage given thereby to the gaining the end of his labour. Then he must be strong, and valiant, neyther to be amazed with storme, nor affrighted with Thunder, but to hold them according to their naturall causes, and the pleasure of the highest: neyther must hee, like the Foxe which prayeth upon Lambes, imploy all his labour against the smaller frye, but like the Lyon that ceazeth Elephants, thinke the greatest Fish which swimmeth, a reward little enough for the paines which he endureth.

⋆157⋆

Directly deer are spied the sportsman is reminded of his inferiority to the official stalker. Up to that point he may have maintained a degree of self-respect. He may have successfully veiled his distress in climbing interminable steeps; he may have aped the careless con-

fidence with which his guide examines fen and corrie, hill-face and crag—as familiar to the guardian of the beat as the chambers of a mansion to its housekeeper; he may even be as quick in detecting deer as the other; but as soon as they are detected, he falls into his place; he ceases to be an individual and becomes 'a rifle'—an automaton to be set in motion by the master of the craft.

After a prolonged inspection through his glass of the dusky objects a mile distant in the corrie, Donald pronounces three out of the fifty or so to be good beasts and 'shootable'. I am filled with marvel, as usual, at the power of discernment, little short of superhuman, it seems to me, which enables a man to pronounce the weight and age of a creature so distant that it looks like an undersized house-fly. I can tell a good head afar off; but if I say anything about it, I am generally told that it is accompanied by a poor body, and must not be shot. So I have learned not only to be dumb on such occasions, but to refrain from entertaining any independent opinion whatever.

Well, Donald, having decided that the beasts were worth stalking, set off on a detour of two or three miles, to arrive within business range of them. Hitherto it had been wet indeed—very wet—but the hill had given shelter from the blast; now, as we climbed the comb of the ridge, it battered us to some purpose. Bitter, bitter cold; as we mounted higher the rain changed to sleet, then to soft snow. Nothing to com-

plain of, this, while moving briskly; the trial came when we reached the upper rim of the corrie. The ground here was covered with loose shingle, boulders, and wan moss, scant cover for three hundred yards of crawling on hands and knees, which brought us again within sight of the deer; after that came a hundred yards—'on thy belly shalt thou go', commanded Donald in effect, by doing so himself and wriggling along serpent-wise. To all his movements I conformed, with my nose close to his hob-nails. We were full in view of the deer now; the slightest irregular movement on our part and some vigilant hind would 'pick us up'; two hours' labour would have been wasted.

At last we came to a limit beyond which we could not venture. Donald whispered that we must wait till they fed within range. Now to wait thus in warm, dry heather—in sunshine—is by no means the least luxurious part of hill work. But here to-day, plastered prone on soaking moss, with a sharp stone digging into the pit of one's stomach, snow driving into and melting in one's ears, the wind piercing through wet tweed and flannel as though it had been mousseline-de-laine—the question presented itself, '*Is* this fun?' to be answered only in the words quoted by Whyte-Melville, 'It *may* be sport, but I'm d—d if you can call it pleasure.'

A pair of ptarmigan, indeed, strutting about among the rocks, purred their contentment with matters meteorological and otherwise; but who ever saw a dissatisfied ptarmigan? it is the very Mark Tapley

among birds. More sympathetic seemed a small wisp of golden plover which flitted past among the falling flakes; of all bird voices, their pipe is the most melancholy; but they went their way and left us flattened on unhappy stomachs. Still the deer lingered, moving forward but by inches.

I was beginning to wonder what might be the limits of human endurance short of congelation, when Donald, looking round, beckoned me with his eyelids to draw up alongside of him. Slipping the rifle into my frozen hands, he bid me take 'that beast—the dark one behind the four hinds'. My eyes were full of water born of sheer physical misery; I saw nothing but indistinct grey forms among grey boulders. At last, but with difficulty, I recognised the stag he meant—a fine, thick-necked fellow, broadside on, about one hundred and twenty yards off. I endeavoured to aim as I lay. Impossible! By no contortionist device could I attain a posture which did not completely prevent every chance of hitting the mark. Slowly I raised my numbed frame into a sitting attitude; before I could draw the bead they saw me; the good stag turned to fly, leaving nothing to shoot at but his haunches; but he had not increased the distance between us by a score of yards before the other deer, hitherto out of sight, came up out of the corrie and turned him. Now was my chance, and a fair one, could I only make use of it in my frozen state.

A steady aim at the stag's shoulder—a pressure of

the trigger—and a miss! 'Make sure of him now,' whispered Donald, and certainly a fairer mark was never offered. Crack! I saw the bullet strike the rocks in a way that showed me it had passed under the stag's belly.

He was gone! I had doubly bungled, but worse was to follow.

More deer were coming up the pass. 'There, take that one,' hissed Donald, cramming in a third cartridge as a noble stag ambled by. It was hardly such an easy shot as the first; still, it was one which there was no shadow of excuse for missing; nevertheless, missed it was.

Drenched and dispirited, I descended the hill, confirmed in my boding that deer-stalking is not all plums —an impression which a successful stalk and neatly killed stag in the evening has not entirely dispelled.

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Bearing in mind all the possibilities thus open, the wheelwright dealt carefully with each tree, deciding first the lengths it should be cut into, and perhaps altering his plans altogether if a bad knot after all turned out to be in the wrong place, or if the original intention would have involved too great waste in the total length. With a little pinching the measure here, and a little stretching there, it was usually possible to rescue

odd and otherwise wasted inches and get them all together at the top into the two feet or so required for a 'felloe-block'. Lastly, the various points for cross-cutting the tree were scratched with a 'race'—a sort of knife with point turned back and sharpened at the bend for this especial purpose—and this done the wheelwright might pass on to the next tree. If he was really master of his timber, if he knew what he had already got in stock and also what was likely to be wanted in years to come, he kept a watch always for timber with special curves, suitable for hames, or shaft-braces, or waggon heads, or hounds, or tailboard rails, or whatever else the tree-shape might suggest.

And when the sawyers had been instructed, still it was well to be near their work. Besides, the felloe-blocks, sawn down the middle, could often be profitably sawn again; and to pencil out the shapes on them gave the wheelwright much scope to exercise his ingenuity and his knowledge. It was in fact a fascinating task. I have spent hours at it beside the saw-pit. It must have been a cold job too. For it was always winter work; and sometimes snow lay on the felloe-blocks. It was cold, to handle them; cold, to stand hour after hour trying the varying felloe-patterns on them. At least so I should suppose now; yet I have no recollection of feeling the cold at the time. The work was too interesting. The winter, the timber, the wheelwright's continuous tussle, the traditional adaptation, by skill and knowledge—all these factors, not thought of but

felt, to the accompaniment of wood-scents and saw-pit sounds, kept me from thinking of the cold—unless to appreciate that too. Delightful? It was somehow better than that. It was England's very life one became a part of, in the timber-yard. The settling of this Island had only started about fifteen hundred years earlier and was still going on. It was no picnic. I was often tired to death at it. For I by no means perceived what a big thing I was taking so obscure a part in. In fact, more than once I tried to get clear of the business altogether, it was so fatiguing and it bored me so. Only now have I realised how I ought to have felt privileged to be taking part at all in the century-old colonisation of England.

★159★

To rise at five of a summer's morning, and see the azure of the sky and the glorious sun, may be, perhaps, no great hardship, although there are few persons who could long remain poetical on bread and cheese. But to rise at five on a dark winter's morning is a very different affair. To put on coarse nailed boots, weighing fully seven pounds, gaiters up above the knee, a short greatcoat of some heavy material, and to step out into the driving rain and trudge wearily over field after field of wet grass, with the furrows full of water; then to sit on a three-legged stool, with mud and manure half-way up the ankles, and milk cows with one's head

leaning against their damp, smoking hides for two hours, with the rain coming steadily drip, drip, drip—this is a very different affair.

The 'fogger' on a snowy morning in the winter has to encounter about the most unpleasant circumstances imaginable. Icicles hang from the eaves of the rick, and its thatch is covered with snow. Up the slippery ladder in the dark morning, one knee out upon the snow-covered thatch, he plunges the broad hay-knife in and cuts away an enormous truss—then a great prong is stuck into this, a prong made on purpose, with extra thick and powerful handle, and the truss, well bound round with a horse-hair rope, is hoisted on the head and shoulders. This heavy weight the fogger has to carry perhaps half-a-mile through the snow; the furrows in the field are frozen over, but his weight crashes through the ice, slush into the chilly water. Rain, snow, or bitter frost, or still more bitter east winds—'harsh winds', as he most truly calls them—the fogger must take no heed of either, for the cows must be fed.

A quart of threepenny ale for breakfast, with a hunch of bread and cheese, then out to work again in the weather, let it be what it may. The cowyards have to be cleaned out—if not done before breakfast—the manure thrown into heaps, and the heaps wheeled outside. Or, perhaps, the master has given him a job of piece-work to fill up the middle of the day with—a hedge to cut and ditch. This means more slush, wet, cold, and discomfort.

Lord Sidney managed to help score upon score of vigorous working men from his immediate neighbourhood to set out for Australia with their wives and little children.

The clergyman's quick sympathy did not miss the pathos of such simple people gallantly adventuring so much, even though it was to escape from a state of merciless bondage *without hope*.

'Penury may make the English peasant's home a scene of daily bitter struggle; but it is *still home*. There is the outfit to be procured, home debts to be paid, the furniture to be sold, the cottage to be given up; there is packing to be done.' The man would like to take the clock: 'I could take it out of its case and then it would scarce occupy any room.' His wife would like to keep the great cooking-boiler, 'with its well-sooted hook and chain. . . . It won't weight much. . . . There is the great staring tea-tray, with its picture of the wagon with large white horses, and waggoner with his large white calves; the chief ornament of the cottage wall, the very tray they bought for their wedding tea-party—both would like to save this. Still, shop-keeper, shoe-maker, miller's man, by their frequent calls keep alive the fact that money must be found. . . . There is the last Sabbath—the last night. . . . How little do they know of the poor who think that any amount of hard work or hard usage can obliterate amongst them

love for each other—nay, a sort of love for everything connected with the scene of their daily life, even for things which have embittered it!'

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I imagined the case of a cottager at one end of the village occupied in chopping up a tough piece of wood or stump and accidentally letting fall his heavy sharp axe on to his foot, inflicting a grievous wound. The tidings of the accident would fly from mouth to mouth to the other extremity of the village, a mile distant; not only would every individual quickly know of it, but have at the same time a vivid mental image of his fellow villager at the moment of his misadventure, the sharp glittering axe falling on to his foot, the red blood flowing from the wound; and he would at the same time feel the wound in his own foot, and the shock to his system.

In like manner all thoughts and feelings would pass freely from one to another, although not necessarily communicated by speech; and all would be participants in virtue of that sympathy and solidarity uniting the members of a small isolated community. No one would be capable of a thought or emotion which would seem strange to the others.

The temper, the mood, the outlook, of the individual and the village would be the same.

I remember that something once occurred in a village where I was staying, which was in a way important to the villagers, although it gave them nothing and took nothing from them: it excited them without being a question of politics, or of 'morality', to use the word in its narrow, popular sense. I spoke first to a woman of the village about it, and was not a little surprised at the view she took of the matter, for to me this seemed unreasonable; but I soon found that all the villagers took this same unreasonable view, their indignation, pity and other emotions excited being all expended, as it seemed to me, in the wrong direction. The woman had, in fact, merely spoken the mind of the village.

Owing to this close intimacy and family character of the village which continues from generation to generation, there must be under all differences on the surface a close mental likeness hardly to be realised by those who live in populous centres; a union between mind and mind corresponding to that reticulation, as it appeared to me, of plot with plot and with all they contained. It is perhaps equally hard to realise that this one mind of a particular village is individual, wholly its own, unlike that of any other village, near or far. For one village differs from another; and the village is in a sense a body, and this body and the mind that inhabits it act and react on one another, and there is between them a correspondence and harmony, although it may be but a rude harmony.

It is probable that we that are country born and bred are affected in more ways and more profoundly than we know by our surroundings. The nature of the soil we live on, the absence or presence of running water, of hills, rocks, woods, open spaces; every feature in the landscape, the vegetative and animal life—everything, in fact, that we see, hear, smell and feel, enters not into the body only, but the soul, and helps to shape and colour it. Equally important in its action on us are the conditions created by man himself—situation, size, form and the arrangements of the houses in the village; its traditions, customs and social life.

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This wayside church, lost in the featureless plain, was full of oddments, each visualising some forgotten zeal or activity of the old village life. There was an old oak chest that once contained the copes and other vestments of the priests. Opposite it was a massive tomb, somewhere about 1800, hiding the bones of one Spiers who left annual top-coats and gowns for the needs of the village, and this endowment is still preserved, though now confined to one top-coat and one gown every year. There were several Elizabethan brasses and a fine carved piscina. My guide conducted me from one monument and relic of a once-throbbing life to another and it was as diligently if surreptitiously that I looked

at her as at the memorials of the old village craftsmen. Supremely was she the Vicar's daughter, the grand archetype of all the legendary daughters of all the legendary Vicars and as real to us as dragons, knights and fairy princesses. Her voice 'Gentle and low', her courteous manner and wan smile were an evocation of something that had utterly vanished from the world.

I began to feel that the order of my dimensional strata was getting crumpled, but, if Ludgershall was a place of dreams, the dream itself was no silken one. The earth is of so stubborn a clay for tillage and cultivation that the digger has to have a 'dip-bucket' beside him for the disencumbering his tools. The floods when they come suspend all manual work, while in drought the surface springs cease to flow. Here was a village remote from highways ancient or modern, whose life was dour and harassed by natural discommodity. Yet it had left faded credentials to the variety and fruitfulness of its former energies. A burning spirit whose name is deathless had there folded its wings, and an artist carved stone there whose name lacks even a tombstone. He had fameless fellows whose honour is to be deciphered in their daily work, masons, wheelwrights, builders, designers, carpenters. These good countrymen lived in an obscure village called Ludgershall, and that is their epitaph. Ludgershall itself only exists by virtue of their labours and upon the agricultural tradition which each year is crumbling nearer to ruin. How strange, then, to observe that mouldering

Ludgershall possesses an identity, a particular character, even though it be only a shell, of which the new settlements of the invaders from the towns possess not a trace!

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And to begin with the cottages. They are scattered over the valleys, and under the hill-sides, and on the rocks; and, even to this day, in the more retired dales, without any intrusion of more assuming buildings. The dwelling-houses, and contiguous outhouses, are, in many instances, of the colour of the native rock, out of which they have been built; but frequently the Dwelling or Firehouse, as it is ordinarily called, has been distinguished from the barn or byre by rough-cast or whitewash, which, as the inhabitants are not hasty in renewing it, in a few years acquires, by the influence of weather, a tint at once sober and variegated. As these houses have been, from father to son, inhabited by persons engaged in the same occupations, yet necessarily with changes in their circumstances, they have received without incongruity additions and accommodations adapted to the needs of each successive occupant, who, being for the most part proprietor, was at liberty to follow his own fancy; so that these humble dwellings remind the contemplative speculator of a production of Nature, and may (using a strong expression), rather be said to have grown than to have

been erected;—to have risen, by an instinct of their own, out of the native rock—so little is there in them of formality, such is their wildness and beauty. Among the numerous recesses and projections in the walls and in the different stages of their roofs, are seen bold and harmonious effects of contrasted sunshine and shadow. It is a favourable circumstance that the strong winds which sweep down the valleys, induced the inhabitants, at a time when the materials for building were easily procured, to furnish many of these dwellings with substantial porches; and such as have not this defence, are seldom unprovided with a projection of two large slates over their thresholds. Nor will the singular beauty of the chimneys escape the eye of the attentive traveller. Sometimes a low chimney, almost up on a level with the roof, is overlaid with a slate, supported upon four slender pillars, to prevent the wind from driving the smoke down the chimney. Others are of a quadrangular shape, rising one or two feet above the roof: which low square is often surmounted by a tall cylinder, giving to the cottage chimney the most beautiful shape in which it is ever seen. Nor will it be too fanciful or refined to remark that there is a pleasing harmony between a tall chimney of this circular form and the living column of smoke, ascending from it through the still air. These dwellings, mostly built, as has been said, of rough unhewn stone, are roofed with slates, which were rudely taken from the quarry before the present art of splitting them was under-

stood, and are, therefore, rough and uneven in their surface, so that both the coverings and sides of the houses have furnished places of rest for the seeds of lichens, mosses, ferns, and flowers. Hence buildings, which in their very form call to mind the processes of Nature, do thus, clothed in part with a vegetable garb, appear to be received into the bosom of the living principle of things, as it acts and exists among the woods and fields; and, by their colour and their shape, affectingly direct the thoughts to that tranquil course of Nature and simplicity, along which the humble-minded inhabitants have, through so many generations, been led. Add the little garden with its shed for bee-hives, its small bed of pot-herbs, and its borders and patches of flowers for Sunday posies, with sometimes a choice few too much prized to be plucked; an orchard of proportioned size; a cheese-press, often supported by some tree near the door; a cluster of embowering sycamores for summer shade; with a tall fir through which the winds sing when other trees are leafless; the little rill or household spout murmuring in all seasons;—combine these incidents and images together, and you have the representative idea of a mountain-cottage in this country so beautifully formed in itself, and so richly adorned by the hand of Nature.

Till within the last sixty years there was no communication between any of these vales by carriage-roads; all bulky articles were transported on pack-horses. . . . To the smallness of the several properties

is owing the great number of bridges over the brooks and torrents, and the daring and graceful neglect of danger or accommodation with which so many of them are constructed, the rudeness of the forms of some, and their endless variety. But, when I speak of this rudeness, I must at the same time add, that many of these structures are in themselves models of elegance, as if they had been formed upon principles of the most thoughtful architecture. It is to be regretted that these monuments of the skill of our ancestors, and of that happy instinct by which consummate beauty was produced, are disappearing fast.

Upon this subject I have nothing further to notice, except the places of worship, which have mostly a little school-house adjoining. The architecture of these churches and chapels, where they have not been recently rebuilt or modernized, is of a style not less appropriate and admirable than that of the dwelling-houses and other structures. How sacred the spirit by which our forefathers were directed! The *religio loci* is nowhere violated by these unstinted yet unpretending, works of human hands.

Towards the head of these Dales was found a perfect Republic of Shepherds and Agriculturists, among whom the plough of each man was confined to the maintenance of his own family, or to the occasional accommodation of his neighbour. Two or three cows furnished each family with milk and cheese. The chapel was the only edifice that presided over these dwellings,

the supreme head of this pure Commonwealth; the members of which existed in the midst of a powerful empire like an ideal society or an organized community, whose constitution had been imposed and regulated by the mountains which protected it. Neither high-born nobleman, knight, nor esquire was here; but many of these humble sons of the hills had a consciousness that the land, which they walked over and tilled, had for more than five hundred years been possessed by men of their name and blood.

★164★

While I have been thinking, a flock of sheep has stolen quietly into the space enclosed by the entrenchment. With the iron head of his crook placed against his breast, and the handle aslant to the ground, the shepherd leans against it, and looks down upon the reapers. He is a young man, and has a bright, intelligent expression on his features. Alone with his sheep so many hours, he is glad of some one to talk to, and points out to me the various places in view. The copses that cover the slopes of the hills he calls 'holts'; there are three or four within a short distance. His crook is not a Pycombe crook (for the best crooks used to be made at Pycombe, a little Down hamlet), but he had another, which was made from a Pycombe pattern. The village craftsman, whose shepherd's crooks were

sought for all along the South Downs, is no more, and he has left no one able to carry on his work. He had an apprentice, but the apprentice has taken to another craft, and cannot make crooks. The Pycombe crook has a curve or semicircle, and then opens straight; the straight part starts at a tangent from a semicircle. How difficult it is to describe so simple a matter as a shepherd's crook! In some way or other this Pycombe crook is found more effective for capturing sheep, but it is not so easy to make. The crook he held in his hand opened with an elongated curve. It appeared very small beside the ordinary crooks; this, he said, was an advantage, as it would hold a lamb. Another he showed me had the ordinary hook; this was bought at Brighton. The curve was too big, and a sheep could get its leg out; besides which, the iron was too soft, and when a sheep was caught the iron bent and enlarged, and so let the sheep go. The handles were of hazel; one handle was straight, smooth, and the best in appearance—but he said it was weak; the other handle, which was crooked and rough-looking, was twice as strong. They used hazel rods for handles—ash rods were apt to 'fly', *i.e.* break.

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The 'P.S.', or Peter Stubbs's files, were so vastly superior to other files, both in the superiority of the steel and in the perfection of the cutting, which long

retained its efficiency, that every workman gloried in the possession and use of such durable tools. Being naturally interested in everything connected with tools and mechanics, I was exceedingly anxious to visit the factory where these files were made. I obtained an introduction to William Stubbs, the head of the firm, and was received by him with much cordiality. When I asked him if I might be favoured with a sight of his factory, he replied that he had no factory, as such; and that all he had to do in supplying his large warehouse was to serve out the requisite quantities of pure cast steel as rods and bars to the workmen; and that they, on their part, forged the metal into files of every description at their own cottage workshops, principally situated in the neighbouring counties of Cheshire and Lancashire.

The information surprised as well as pleased me. Mr. Stubbs proceeded to give me an account of the origin of this peculiar system of cottage manufacture in his neighbourhood. It appears that Hugo de Lupus, William the Conqueror's Master of Arms, the first Earl of Chester, settled in North Cheshire shortly after the Conquest. He occupied Halton Castle, and his workmen resided in Warrington and the adjacent villages of Appleton, Widnes, and Prescot. There they produced coats of steel, mail armour, and steel and iron repairs, under the direct superintendence of their chief.

The manufacture thus founded continued for many

centuries. Although the use of armour was discontinued, the workers in steel and iron still continued famous. The skill that had formerly been employed in forging chain armour and iron instruments was devoted to more peaceful purposes. The cottage workmen made the best of files and steel tools of other kinds. Their talents became hereditary, and the manufacture of wire in all its forms is almost peculiar to Warrington and the neighbourhood. Mr. Stubbs also informed me that most of the workmen's peculiar names for tools and implements were traceable to old Norman-French words. He also stated that at Prescot a peculiar class of workmen has long been established, celebrated for their great skill in clock and watch-making; and that, in his opinion, they were the direct descendants of a swarm of workmen from Hugo de Lupus's original Norman hive of refined metal-workers, dating from the time of the Conquest.

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They were all steady young men; and the foreman, Mr. Andrew Notman, was something more; he had lived long in Edinburgh, had mixed much with mankind, and read much. He was the first to make me so acquainted with Shakespere, as to know that in the great dramatic plays there was more than their adaptability to the stage to make them popular—there was

poetry of the highest order in them; and moral instruction not inferior to the poetry. Mr. Notman was remarkable for his fine taste, and ability to execute in workmanship what his taste approved.

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The most remarkable of these was Matthew Prior, who had the character of being one of the best mechanics in the kingdom. . . .

When questioned as to the accuracy of his scale-beam, he said a hair clipped from the back of his hand would turn his scales either way. For a wager, he turned two billiard balls of such equal weights that the difference was as nothing. He was of a most independent cast of character, and open and frank in his conversation. It had been reported that Prior had said of a proud, high-minded gentleman that 'he durst do what neither the gentleman nor any of his family dared do'. Prior had never said any such thing; but this gentleman took him to task about it, and, with great indignation, accused him of saying so. At this, Prior, in his turn, felt offended, and told him, though he never said so, he would now say so to his face. This produced a wager between them; and Matthew told him he would double the bet if he pleased. 'Now', said the gentleman, in high ill-humour, 'what is it you dare do?' 'Do!' said Prior, 'I dare spend the last shilling I have in the world!'

The question of the possession of property, I read somewhere lately, has now become a religious question. On the other hand, the religious people assert that the possession of property can never be a religious question, because in his religious soul a man is indifferent to property either way. I only care about property, money, possessions of any sort, when I have no religion in me. As soon as real religion enters, out goes my interest in the things of this world. . . .

The trouble about this property business, money, possessions, is that we are most of us exceedingly and excruciatingly bored by it. Our fathers got a great thrill out of making money, building their own houses, providing for their old age and laying by something for their children. Children inherit their father's leavings; they never inherit their father's and mother's thrill; never more than the tail end of it: a point to which parents are consistently blind. If my father was thrilled by saving up, I shall be thrilled by blowing my last shilling. If my father gave all he had to the poor, I shall quite enjoy making things pleasant for my own little self. If my father wasted, I shall probably economise. Unless, of course, my father was a jolly waster. . . .

There is a great change coming, bound to come. The whole money arrangement will undergo a change: what, I don't know. The whole industrial system will undergo a change. Work will be different and pay will

be different. The owning of property will be different. Class will be different, and human relations will be modified and perhaps simplified. If we are intelligent, alert and undaunted, then life will be much better, more generous, more spontaneous, more vital, less basely materialistic. If we fall into a state of funk, impotence and persecution, then things may be very much worse than they are now. It is up to us. . . .

I am convinced that the majority of people to-day have good, generous feelings which they can never know, never experience, because of some fear, some repression. I do not believe that people would be villains, thieves, murderers and sexual criminals if they were freed from legal restraint. On the contrary, I think the vast majority would be much more generous, good-hearted and decent if they felt they dared to be. I am convinced that people want to be more decent, more good-hearted than our social system of money and grab allows them to be. The awful fight for money, into which we are all forced, hurts our good nature more than we can bear. I am sure this is true of a vast number of people.

★169★

The singing women were drawing nearer to Levin and he felt as if a thundercloud of merriment were approaching. The cloud moved past, enveloping him and

the haycock upon which he sat, and the other haycocks, the carts, the whole of the meadow, and the distant fields. They all seemed to vibrate and heave with the strains of that wild, madly-merry song, interspersed with screams and whistling. Levin envied them their healthy gaiety and felt a wish to take part in that expression of the joy of living; but he could do nothing except lie and look and listen. When the company and their songs vanished out of sight and hearing, an oppressive feeling of discontent with his own lonely lot, his physical idleness and his hostility to the world overcame Levin. Some of those very peasants who had disputed with him about the hay—whom either he had wronged or who had tried to cheat him—those very peasants had bowed pleasantly to him, evidently not harbouring, and unable to harbour, any ill-will toward him, being not only unrepentant but even forgetful that they had been trying to cheat him. All had been drowned in the sea of their joyful common toil. God had given them the day and the strength, and both the day and the strength had been devoted to labour which had brought its own reward. For whom they had laboured and what the fruits of their labour would be was an extraneous and unimportant affair.

Levin had often admired that kind of life, had often envied the folk who lived it; but that day, especially after what he had heard for the first time of the relations between Vanka Parmenich and his young wife, it struck him that it depended on himself to change his wearisome,

idle, and artificial personal life for that pure, delightful life of common toil.

The old man who had been sitting beside him had long since gone home. The peasants who lived near by had also gone home, and those from a distance had gathered together to have supper and spend the night in the meadow. Levin, unnoticed by them, still lay on the haycock, looking, listening, and thinking. The peasants who were staying in the meadow kept awake almost all the short summer night. At first the sounds of merry general talk and shouts of laughter over their supper could be heard, then songs and more laughter. The whole long day of toil had left upon them no trace of anything but merriment.

Just before dawn all became silent. The sounds of night—the ceaseless croaking of frogs, the snorting of horses through the morning mist over the meadow—could alone be heard. Awaking to reality, Levin rose from his haycock, and glancing up at the stars, realized that the night was nearly over.

⋆ *Notes* ⋆

'*Unknown modes of being.*'

Not only expressed in 'huge and mighty forms'; there is a furious energy in knots of wood. There was a log I was trying to split, which the more it resisted, the more determined I was that it should split, though at last I had to own myself beaten and sat down on the chopping block for a rest. I stared at the log; the core of its resistance was a complex disturbance in the grain which was wound into small tight spirals, one against the other. The log had weathered stone-grey, but the knots still seemed to be whirling and eddying with life, the grain unwinding from one and winding upon another, so that it was as near as anything in nature could be to a system of belts and pulleys in a busy workshop. Above in the grey winter sky, a similar power seemed at work eddying a multitude of rooks round and round, up and up, one instinct keeping them all in a sort of ritualistic motion.

This power (of knots in wood) which literally put the fear of God into Blake, may be also the source of that 'satisfaction' of the old wheelwrights in their

work, the sense of touching a reality, or in the old meaning of the word, a mystery. 'Overworked and underpaid, they none the less enjoyed life, I am sure. They were friends as only a craftsman can be, with timber and iron. The grain of the wood told secrets to them.' (BOURNE).

'*Some few unaccountable moments when nothing took place.*'

These whose effect is most clear, sudden and intense always elude words. Bells, perhaps, have this quality most generally, but nobody has yet transmitted it in writing of them. The secret, I think, is echo: that unaccountable moment vibrates a forgotten one. Edmund Blunden's sonnet on Spring seems to me to catch a drop of that quicksilver; and perhaps Jacques Chardonne's observed 'charming gesture' of a bargee throwing out a pail on a rope into a canal on a calm misty morning. Such things are like the spider's web that is spun every morning across the door of my toolshed. Snap a few threads of it and the whole tension collapses, and all its frosted symmetry is reduced to a thimbleful of fluff. But to-morrow it will be there again. They need the mysterious buoyant medium of their occasion. They have to do, after all, with the true nature of things, and preoccupation is so a part of civilized life, that it is only at moments that we are surprised out of it. Even Ruskin confessed himself beaten by the task of communication;—'No words that I know of will express what these mosses are.'

'*How little I knew of the enormous world beyond that valley.*'

How little indeed. Certainly at a public school one was given no inkling of the kind of life lived by the farm labourer, Jim. In fact, though set in the heart of the country, the school completely ignored the land: it might have been an island in the sea for the amount of contact with or understanding of the organism of agriculture that was imparted to us. Certainly a public school cannot be an agricultural college, but to ignore even in its cultural bearings the story of our land that lay like an open book before us in the fields, seems disproportionate. It may be different now, but then fields were only playing fields. The only excursions into the country other than five mile runs to keep 'fit' were botanical—about once a year. Except that at a late period in the war we were sent hoeing; and a nice hash we made of it, cutting up half the corn and playing the fool generally. The farmer and his wife gave us a fine tea in their garden. It must have been a costly day for them.

To be a prefect at a public school may be well enough if you are to take an administrative post among people of more or less your own class, but it gives you no clue as to how to talk with labourers or join in the 'teamwork' of a farm. There is no one there to blow a whistle at a crisis.

'Far from his cottage door in peace or strife
He ne'er went fifty miles in all his life.'

I was talking to the gardener on a big farm, a small energetic man who never wasted a moment of his day. He had a great old-fashioned garden to attend to—lawns, flowers, vegetables—one that in the prosperous days of agriculture had employed two men and a boy. Somehow he kept it trim and had always a show of flowers in all the beds, and the kitchen garden well tilled and sown. At the end of the day he repaired to his own garden, and with his son's help cultivated a piece of allotment ground as well. I asked him about some rose bushes in a cottage garden a few hundred yards up the road, of what kind the roses were. He answered: 'I really don't know; I've lived here twelve years but I've never had occasion to go that way.'

His was a musical family; they played between them the harmonium, the violin and the harp, and after dusk in the winter they would be at it. In the next-door cottage lived the tractor driver: he was fond of mechanical things and had an extra-loud wireless set with which he was always tinkering—'improving it', he said. One day he said, beaming all over his face: 'Last night I got that so loud that I had to go into the next room.'

His young daughter used to work for us. She said: 'On Sunday evenings we have to sit ever so quiet so that mother can hear the weather forecast, for her

washing on Monday. And if it says fine she claps her hands.'

'*O God! methinks it were a happy life.*'

This is a typical day in the life of a sheep-farmer and stock-breeder. First there are two colts to be caught and taken to a meadow some way up the road. Rearing in the narrow space and making sudden rushes, they would knock the man down if he were not agile and as watchful as they are nervous. At last the halters are on, and they are led along the road. On the way, the farmer notices that the bigger colt is slightly lame through having worn down the off-side hoof on one side. It must be pared. Having got the colt into the meadow he tries to handle him. He rears and plunges; lets him lift the near side leg at last, but flinches violently as soon as the off-side leg is touched. It is not that that leg is tender, but merely that he is used to being approached and handled from the other side only. The farmer says that his father used to call to the men, when they were going to handle a colt: 'Put the bridle on from the other side for a change, to get him used to it.'

Now began a long tussle to tire the colt. Round and round they went till both were sweating. His men, standing by, had lost heart at the beginning, murmuring, 'That don't do to mess 'un about like that; you'll only get hurt.' However, the colt was brought to it at last, though twice when the hoof was lifted he rolled right down on the ground, and it was a matter of jump-

ing out of the way before the hoofs came up, yet hanging on at all costs to the halter. At last, putting the halter rope under his shoulder and pulling on it to keep his head down, and lifting the hoof and supporting the weight of it (and much of the colt's body), he took out his knife and pared the hoof.

Then to the next job, bringing the ewes in from the field into a small fold, catching those that have got the fly-blow, and treating them with disinfectant; taking both hands and simply 'worrying' the gentles out of the bad places, an audience of hens snapping them up as they tumble out on to the grass. I do not know what breed of sheep they used to run at Stratford-on-Avon in Shakespeare's time, not one with the close cork-like fleece of our highly-bred modern Southdown I expect, and possibly one that did not take the fly-blow so badly. It must have been more pleasant certainly to carve out dials quaintly point by point.

A happy life? Yes, on the whole, but hardly the ideal of a carefree occupation. To the worries of the fly are added the worries of feed; sowing turnips again and again in the summer, dashing out after a shower with the seed-barrow, and then, when they have 'chitted', praying for another shower to bring them up clear of the jacks that prey upon the first two leaves and destroy the whole germinating crop in a day or two. The weather that is good for his turnips, sunny and moist, is the worst possible for the fly-blow.

Such is the 'homely swain's' day in 1936.

'*They may be worn and stained by many a long day's labour.*'

Not only do they 'never look shabby', but take on very often the characteristic hue of the man's trade (*cf.* Hardy's *Reddleman*). I remember one man who used to work in a sand-pit; his brown corduroys had taken on a golden glow, so that passing that way one could often hardly tell if he were there or not, the colour of his clothes so melted into the colour of the sand. Only his movements made his presence seen, and his jet black beard. One would meet him walking home to his dinner, like a piece of the sand-pit detached and moving along the road. In the autumn especially, when the chestnut trees were yellow, his figure would shine beneath them, tall and straight with his black beard.

There was a kind of corduroy that the local tailor used to stock; it was called, I think, 'pheasant's eye'. It was a rich sort of gingerbread brown patterned with little 'pheasant's eyes' of a more reddish tinge. It was used for making coats for 'best', and particularly for those thick double-breasted waistcoats countrymen used to wear.

There are yet little glimpses of finery in the farm labourer's costume; as he heaves up a sack his working waistcoat lifts, revealing another underneath of apple green with a pattern of stitching. Once, as a man was unloading bags of meal I saw round his waist an elaborate silver-plated belt: it was composed of many

plates of an open-work pattern, joined together with little springs.

'*Insufferable tale of flax and jute.*'

I don't know how the hands of the educational authorities were kept from a certain village school for so long, but as recently as 1914 a lady of the village used to teach the children, and in her own way. She encouraged them to look at the ground, and to bring to her anything they thought interesting from the fields. In this way she gathered a surprisingly good collection of local things: flint axe-heads, old coins, fossils, flowers, butterflies, etc. A little museum was made of one corner of the schoolroom, and from these visible objects she built up for her pupils the history of their native place and the nature of its fields in which most of them were destined to work all their lives, leaving the exports of Bombay to look after themselves. She said that the interest shown by the children in collecting these things was boundless. She taught also the old-fashioned courtesies—the curtsey and the doffing of the cap. But she retired; the local authorities stepped in, a young certificated teacher was appointed, who had learned all about flax and jute, and who instituted (this to the good, perhaps) instead of the curtsey, physical jerks. The local collection was packed up and put away, and the ideal of betterment put before the children now is that they should learn enough to pass an exam. which will qualify them to get a job in an office.

'*The Christmas pantomime.*'

To the village, at any rate, the cinema is still no substitute. In the market town, there were two pantomimes last Christmas instead of one the year before, and for days the tales of its wonders were told along the lanes. It is odd that that favourite world-weary type of cinema star twice a week should leave such wide eyes for the fairy queen and her retinue ('ever such little children, all dressed in pink, and they sang lovely'), the Widow Twankey, the Demon Rat, etc. The Demon Rat particularly made a great impression. Perhaps it was just the Christmas spirit.

'*A little bank vole.*'

I was sitting in my garden last summer when a vole appeared, gathering the materials for a nest. I was fascinated by the intense concentration the work required, not so much in the gathering of the material as in the extreme caution displayed. Each emergence from the thimble-like hole was followed by a bright stillness. I too kept still, and he dared a swift clockwork rush. He was halfway to his objective, but being so far from home, his fears were redoubled. One felt almost an agony of indecision going on in his small body. At length he made the last run, seized just one withered grass stem and fled back to his hole. In a minute out popped his head again as apprehensive as ever, and he went through it all again for one more grass stem.

'*A cloud comes over Charlotte Street.*'

I was shooting one day in the autumn with a farmer who had lived always in the place where he was now. A storm blew up and I said it looked as though we should get wet. But he pointed out to me how the storm was splitting, part going one way and part another. In a few minutes the heavier cloud could be seen raining down upon the horizon. It was a magnificent sight, like a great grey curtain enclosing our sunny space. I wondered aloud who was getting it, and my companion, judging the distance, named successively the places it would be passing over. There was, as it were, a mirage of those villages cast up on the cloud to his local mind, and all the innumerable hurry and disturbance caused by the storm.

'That'll upset old J——,' he said. 'I saw he was threshing when I went to the station with the milk this morning—that's just about right over his place now. I reckon that's making them bustle about.' A picture of the blackening roadway there, the cloths being hastily drawn over the stack and the drum, and everybody running for shelter, was brought before us by his words as we stood in our calm warm sun staring at the black cloud.

'*Sources of true observation of living things.*'

A farmer of several hundreds of acres, having just seen to the threshing and on his way preoccupied with the organising of the carting of his sugar-beet, stopped

suddenly and said, 'What are those turkeys looking at? There's something there.' To the ordinary view they were merely a flock of turkeys standing in a field; but he noticed something in the poise of their heads signifying interest and enquiry. He went out of his way to see, and sure enough we found a hare crouching in the grass facing them. She stayed quite still for a minute, then got up and departed more stealthily than hastily, at least until she had got through the hedge—then she made off at full speed.

'I knew there was something,' the farmer said, and continued his way to the sugar-beet carting, preoccupied with the organisation of a great arable farm.

'*Framed by the window sashes.*'

It is such isolated glimpses that are our first delight in a place. When one knows what is round the bend of the lane or beyond the belt of trees, one can no longer isolate the scene one is observing, but the mind's eye continues the panorama where the bodily eye is halted. The same applies to the knowledge of people and events. The cottage you pass is never quite the same when you know the people who live in it; their characteristics and qualities stare at you out of the windows. We are surprised to find the scenes as they struck us first, reflected by chance in a mirror or picture-glass; we see then that they have still that virgin freshness that so delighted us. We turn to them and it vanishes. It is only after being a long while in a place

and getting really to know it that a similar kind of wonder returns. It is strangeness at a deeper level; one becomes aware, through observation and hearsay, of the past of the place receding indefinitely, and there is the sense common to all knowledge, that the more one knows the more there seems that one does not know. I seldom experience this to a greater degree than when waiting for pigeons in a nearby field—to be sitting there motionless in the midst of a multitudinous life that has no knowledge of one's presence is to be a sort of ghost. A wood-pecker suddenly appears hammering at the tree above, the tits are busy as shuttles across the boughs of my ambush.

But in the case of country towns the only real glimpses of their character are now to be had through archways, doorways and over walls. The main streets are fronted with the same modern shop-fittings and the same multiple stores; only by such tokens as a leaden pump in a cobbled yard, a little lace displayed in a cottage window, can one guess at the old life and work of the place.

'*The first-rate yeoman of that period.*'

To-day the yeoman's home impressively reflects the standards of a former age. There are Georgian pillars in half-relief up the tall front beside the porch. Within is a great hall with a fireplace at each end. On the wall there is a portrait of an old friend in full hunting kit; a fox's mask on a little shield inscribed with details of

the run—somewhere about 1901. There is a white pheasant, stuffed, which the farmer shot, and an otter and a bittern; and these creatures he looks at and speaks of with lively reminiscence; they are trophies that reawaken a vigorous past in the fields he still walks day after day.

Leading from this hall, which is as large as most people's houses, is a tapestry-walled drawing-room, a dining-room and a breakfast-room. The size of these rooms and their crowded past give constantly a feeling of the farmer and his wife (who alone, with a maid, now inhabit the place) living in expectation of the arrival of a crowd of friends or relations—a shooting party, sons and daughters returned from all over the world, or an evening of cards and anecdotes. When the farmer walks out along his drive and glances up and down the road, it is as though he is looking for these expected guests; and indeed there is a feeling as of them being all about him, even in that (to the 'man in the street') forsaken-looking country of great ploughed fields of a colour deep as distance. For if a car passes the occupants wave: a rider on horseback stops and talks. And within the house this feeling is everywhere, particularly as you pass the door of the dining-room where lunch is set. A cloth is spread over the whole of the large table and on it a joint and possibly a cold duck or pheasants, and a cheese of hospitable dimensions. For the farmer, brought up in a large family and a man of true yeoman taste, cannot bring himself to order

joints of 'baby beef', owing to their immature flavour. He sits down at one end of the table, his wife at the other, and you, the visitor, between. The three of you in that great room become the sketched-in outline of a banquet. The whole end of the room behind the farmer is of glass, and a glass-house the size of the room itself is beyond, with bunches of grapes hanging from its roof and tall palms and ferns and flowers rising from the floor. The view from the tall windows of plate-glass is of iron-railed paddocks in which colts or calves are grouped, and each paddock has one or two walnut trees. On either side of the drive are lawns with clipped yews. This is the view from the front windows, while beyond the front lawns there is a panorama of fifty-acre ploughed fields, undulating with a gentle warp which the atmosphere makes to appear sometimes quite steep and sometimes almost flat.

First thing of an autumn morning horses and men and a tractor may be seen converging upon one of these fields. It is one from which the last of the roots have been carted; it is to be ploughed up quick, before the rain comes, and then drilled with corn. A group of men are finishing the root clamp along the hedge, the ploughs go to and fro, always they are in a different relation to each other; sometimes it so happens that tractor and all three horse-ploughs start from one headland together. The tractor creeps quickly ahead; then the horse-teams string out; the oldest is last in the echelon. This steady ritualistic motion weaves all

day about the great house and its buildings, slowly altering the colour of the fields. It is no more than light when the farmer crunches down the gravel with his dog; and diminishes (in sight the whole time) to a mere dot that moves from one plough-group to another; he fades altogether into the colour of the misty field, and the only indication of his position is the white speck of a dog.

Breakfast is set in the breakfast-room, smaller and more personal in relation to the two of them than the other rooms. It has a large bow window through which the sun streams, and looks on to another lawn, set with rose-beds, walled by the blank red-brick backs of stables and cow-shed. Beyond stands the church at the top of one of his meadows, and higher and further a derelict mill.

His post consists of requests for the use of the schoolroom for election purposes; a plan of a proposed village hall, church matters (there is no clergyman yet to take the place of the old one lately retired); all this besides matters relating to his own business, not to mention official forms for milk, sugar beet, wheat quota, etc. This man has no clerk and no bailiff, yet he manages to conduct the business of the village, his own business, and find time to hunt and shoot as well.

His wife, meanwhile, is organising a whist drive to be held in the great hall in order to help provide money to pay the district nurse. The conversation at breakfast time is entirely taken up with these affairs.

The upper windows at the back of the house have quite a different outlook. There lie the horse-yards, cow-yard, bullock-yard, with their surrounding sheds and stables. There stand the two great corn-barns flanking the buildings and beyond them the stack yard itself, with square corn and hay stacks in the middle and a row of round stacks along the edge. Lastly the cart-lodge and horse-meadow. Embedded among this sea of roofs, tiled, slated and thatched, is a smoking chimney. This belongs to the cowman's cottage, which overlooks the cow-yard. The place is like a village in itself. Beyond all these the fields of the farm extend to the sky-line. But there is more yet; the hunter stables (a pack of hounds was once kept here), the game larder, the kennels, the apple-room, and innumerable other outbuildings—one full of faggots, with a chopping block that has been worn to the shape and colour of a great nutmeg. And then, a door in a wall leads into another part of the garden, enclosed by walls on three sides and by yews on the other. Here tall poppies, phloxes and foxgloves bloom stilly and rarely visited, for the farmer's time is much taken up; and beyond this lies the walled vegetable garden, of about an acre in extent. The roofs of stacks can be seen over the wall from the sequestered garden, and the noises of fowls and cattle come over into its silence. There is also a nuttery full of daffodils in March.

Such was the yeoman's home.

'*Island complex.*'

Almost everyone has it in greater or less degree. A farmer will move heaven and earth to achieve a road-boundary to his estate.

'*Two meals a day.*'

I met a farmer some years back who said that for the first twenty years of his farming life he never had more than two meals a day (except on Sundays)—at eight in the morning and at eight at night—but they *were* meals.

'*Residents from town are beginning to oust the former population.*'

I remember beech leaves golden in a grove beside the road. The road itself was like a bough, forking suddenly at the end of the hollow. It was a windless, remote-seeming spot, its stillness the stillness of trees; and there in the fork of the road stood a cottage, looking up the road. Its garden was no more really than a great bank, rising up behind with hazels at the height of the upper windows, and sloping in front to the road. When first I passed there in late autumn, I saw a couple busy about the garden. A man and woman not exactly young, yet putting their heart into the place as though it were the first home they had ever had. He was painting the garden gate, he had already done the doors and windows; she was pulling up great weeds out of the garden and training the ramping briars with a pair of leather gloves on her hands. They paused as I saw them,

she came to look at his work, he went to look at hers, they lit cigarettes and leaned on the gate (presumably unpainted yet on the inside) and surveyed their abode. I fancied they had run away and made a new start together; there was that sort of look about them. They had named their cottage 'Three Ways'; previous to that I am sure it had just been called 'Old Dobbs's place', or something like that. The cottage was a part of the spot: it had lived for hundreds of years under the shadow of the bank, looking right up the road, blinkered by the beech wood. It had been, like all cottages, a scene of large families and continual toil, especially to keep the garden dug and planted in such short hours of light as the ends of days allowed the labourer.

They were changing all that; they had put up a trellis, they were building a little rockery, they had tucked the vegetables away round at the back, they had painted it white and green, they had called it 'Three Ways'. It had gone gay, with an odd kind of insouciance in its age, and forgotten its past, like them. I could feel the sort of thing they were saying about it—'How the place has been neglected—how the garden has been let go.'

I was that way again in the spring, and there they were at it in the garden as though I had left them only five minutes back; he with the suspicion of baldness at the crown as he bent forward, she with a defiant untidiness about her yellow hair, and a boldness of limb

that precedes stoutness. How they were sprucing it all up! The path had been gravelled, the rockery laid, the trellis only waiting to be clothed. What a brilliant summer they were preparing; how carefully she was sifting the earth over the flower-seeds; while he had the vegetable plot in neat rows sown and labelled. The beech grove was full of birds who sang encouragingly as they worked and I paused to pick celandines.

Next autumn I passed that way again and behold, the cottage empty, marrows invading the flower garden from the vegetable patch, the roses not trained to the trellis and the rockery full of grass. What had happened to them? The cottage with its green paint, its new name and its toy-like make-up looked as blankly surprised as I was. 'Three Ways'; it had become a question. He one way, perhaps, and she another, while the cottage windows looked up the road for the old sort of people it knew.

'*And still the oak continued good.*'

The house I live in is at least four hundred years old, and most of the timbers, I am told, were not new even then, but had been part of ships sailing about the world for years before. They were probably got from Ipswich, when the ships were broken up, and maybe brought here by river. And to-day, even in those that look a bit powdery, screws break and nails bend as they are screwed or hammered in.

'Can't you tell 'em how to get to it?'

I was visiting an acquaintance the other day and stopped to ask the way of an old man digging in his cottage garden.

'Can you tell me', I asked, 'the way to Mr. G—'s farm?'

He looked at me blankly.

'Mr. G— of Lawford,' I explained; 'surely you know the name.'

Still he looked completely blank, repeating in an awe-struck sort of voice, 'Mr. G— of Lawford,' and seeming to listen through a long silence for any echo from the recesses of his memory. At length he lifted his head and said out loud the one word 'Bromley'.

It was my turn to stare. 'No—Mr. G— of Lawford,' I shouted.

'Bromley,' he repeated.

It was stalemate. Then his wife came out, and I said it all over again to her. Husband turned to wife. 'There ain't no Mr. G— I know of in Lawford, only in Bromley.'

I discovered (with the help of the wife) that Mr. G—'s farm, though postally in Lawford, was on the boundary of two parishes and regarded locally as belonging to Bromley. This little difficulty being cleared up, the man became animated and gave me many and exact directions. He obviously knew every inch of the

district. He directed me to go first to Lawford, but by a road which was not the nearest.

'But surely', I said, 'the road I'm on now is the road to Lawford?'

'Ay—you can get to Lawford that way, but I've always took the other road—you don't have to go up and down they great hills.'

The man had been a carter, and his view of the country was the view of a man with horses and a loaded cart; a bad road was not a narrow or a twisting road, but a hilly one. I assured him that a couple of hills meant nothing to a car. Still his parting words were, 'This road'll take you there, but you'd best go by the other way, you'll miss them hills.'

'*Bustle and importance of the coachman.*'

Outside in the square is the clamour of market day, but the little local museum that overlooks it is cool and quiet. There are Roman remains on the one hand, an ancestor of the bicycle on the other, overhead a giant candelabrum made of deer's antlers, and on the table in front a volume of old newspaper files. It does not look a very exciting book, yet within those stiff pages lies a vivid little tale, like a pressed flower retaining the colours of its day of life. It is told in advertisements, their dates between 1800 and 1850.

'The Old Bury Coach', printed in black bold

capitals; the name has a traditional flavour. Above each advertisement is a small stamped picture of a coach and four going full speed ahead, horses like agile fleas bounding proudly on their road. At sight of them the noises of 1936 in the market square outside, whirr of motors, hootings, die away. This is 1809.

THE OLD BURY COACH

Daily
From the Angel Inn to the
Green Dragon, Bishopsgate Street, London,
Set off from Bury St. Edmunds exactly at
Seven o'clock in the morning.

What a frosty, misty-breathed hour for departure, bringing visions of early twilight bustlings in many a country home that one might be ready for that coach.

The Old Bury had rivals. The Norwich coaches passed through Bury St. Edmunds as they raced each other to London. Those were days of fierce road rivalry, when every farmer raced his neighbour to market, and drove home at night after three bottles of port without any lamps. Fifteen miles an hour then held the thrill of our two hundred.

Those were the days when Sam Hayward drove 'The Phenomenon Coach' and George Palmer 'The Times Coach' between Norwich and London. Their advertisements are here, fine examples of braggadocio, telling of comfort and marvellous celerity, and claiming

the 'best horses in the county'. The picture of 'the Phenomenon' has under its wheels a more luxuriant cloud of dust than 'the Times', insinuating thereby a greater speed.

Hereabout the news columns are of interest, shedding light, in a report of law proceedings, on one of the most famous of road races, run between the two coaches above-mentioned on the Norwich-London route in 1827. It is not certain to this day who won—both Hayward and Palmer claimed the victory! Telling a gentleman of the end of the race, Hayward said, 'My horses, sir, reeled into Mrs. Nelson's yard like four drunken men.' And no wonder seeing that the whole journey from Norwich to London, a distance of 113 miles, was covered in $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours, which means an average speed of fifteen miles an hour!

Both men were committed for trial, Hayward for overturning a gig, Palmer for furious driving. At a later date Palmer remarked that his horses ran right away from Hayward's from the start, and he could do nothing to stop them, but in the present case he obtained acquittal by calling a witness who affirmed that when Palmer passed him his horses were only cantering! A witness of Hayward's coach said that it went through Bocking, near Braintree, at a great rate, an old woman (the only outside passenger) shouting 'Murder!' all the way.

But the days of such wild doings were numbered. As the pages are turned, and years pass in the space of

minutes, a portent appears. Instead of a cloud of dust under a wheel, a puff of smoke from a chimney. There is a picture of a vehicle resembling the machines that are used for tarring the roads nowadays, and two men with hats like chimneys stand in Napoleonic attitudes perched at the stern of the monster. It is an advertisement for one of the first railways. But so far it is little more than a portent, the line reaching no further than Chelmsford, and in the Eastern Counties old customs die hard.

However, by 1843 the coach is forced, in the great cause of speed, to stoop to a compromise with the steam engine, abandoning its horses and taking to the iron road for part of the journey; witness the following advertisement:

OLD BURY COACH

from the
Angel and One Bell Hotels
at ten o'clock
In Six Hours and a Quarter
To the Regent Circus, Piccadilly.
Returning from thence at Ten, to the
Railway Station, Shoreditch, by the
Eleven o'clock train to Chelmsford,
arriving at Bury ¼ past Five.
Chaplin, Mason, Wicks and Co.,
Proprietors.

Fares—Outside, 10s.; Inside, 20s.

1845—6—7 were years of fate. The local paper becomes hectic with notices of meetings convened for the discussion of proposed railways in the Eastern Counties, flotations of companies, issues of shares, directors' meetings, reports, bankruptcies, liquidations. Meanwhile the coach goes to and fro, charging 20s. for inside passengers and 10s. for outside.

At last, as a culmination to the chaos of local speculation, appears a notice convening what appears to have been an extraordinary general meeting of all concerned, to protest against the opening of new lines indiscriminately, and to consider co-ordination of all existing companies and lines into one railway.

A little later, in 1845, beneath the picture (growing familiar now in these pages) of the black monster with its powerful puff of smoke, is the laconic notice:

EASTERN COUNTIES RAILWAY
Fares—Inside 12s. 6d.; Outside 7s.

People could now travel to London in a closed carriage on the railway for little more than they had to pay to travel outside by coach, and much more swiftly. The Old Bury did what it could to compete. In 1846 we find the following advertisement:

REDUCED FARES
By Old Bury Coach
Inside 16s.; Outside 10s.

It was in vain. The end drew near. A few months later appears a notice:

OLD BURY COACH

G. Wicks

begs to return his thanks for the patronage he has received since he has been Proprietor of the above Old Established Coach, and to inform his friends that in consequence of the Railway being now open to Bury, it will DISCONTINUE RUNNING FURTHER THAN LONG MELFORD *on and after Saturday next, March 13.*

The story finished with an extract from the *Bury Herald* in 1847; it is entitled:

THE LAST OF THE OLD BURY

It runs:

This old and well-known coach that has run from this town to the metropolis and back for a period beyond the memory of any living man, ceased to make her daily journeys on Friday last. This vehicle was patronised by the gentry and most of the respectable inhabitants of the town, and was driven by Mr. George Wicks for many years. The name of the Old Bury was known far and wide, and the civility of the driver was generally acknowledged. The advance of Railways has at last extinguished the bright hopes of the Old Bury, put out its lights and extinguished its 'Wicks'.

It is a pity that no passenger put on record the last journey of the Old Bury, that no one who happened to

be in the inn yard has told us how he saw George Wicks dismount from the box and his horses led in on that evening in 1847 for the last time, and what George Wicks said.

And where is the Old Bury Coach? Has it rotted away in some Bury St. Edmunds back yard? And George Wicks, did he become an engine driver? I think not. His driving coat has probably descended to some Suffolk rustic, who wears it to this day against the wet, for such garments never wear out.

With the closing of the book, the noises of 1936 going on outside smite the ear once more. There is a good view of the square from the museum window, and standing in the middle of that space is a long red motor vehicle. It is the London coach all prepared to depart.

Time has turned the tables, and in part George Wicks is revenged. Though modern speed and comfort make flimsy ghosts of his advertisements, yet something of the old is regained, the group with bags and rugs on the kerb of the Buttermarket: if not a human relationship between passenger and driver. Enough, at any rate, to make us think that the shade of old Wicks raises his hat and wishes the red bus Godspeed.

'*Unable to do it deliberately*.'

The same applies, apparently, to the budding of roses on a large scale. I was talking to a man who was

budding roses all day in a nursery, stooping from briar to briar and followed by a youth with bast, tying up the buds behind him. He said that when doing many thousands like that he fell into a rhythm, and the job was to get a fellow to keep up with him without having to hurry and so tie carelessly. The great thing was to get two that went naturally at the same pace. If he has to slow down, he said, to let the tyer come up with him, it puts him completely 'off his stroke', and he can't bud half so well. Watching the process and the movements it entailed, one understood. There was the taking of the bud, then bending and in the act of it choosing with the eye a clean spot on the briar stem, slitting the bark, turning the knife and just easing out the edges with the haft (all one continuous movement with the right hand), the other hand then inserting the bud, the man half-straightening and moving on to the next briar. This repeated all day became automatic, and if the rhythm was broken by a deliberate slowing down he began thinking of each action as he did it (as a beginner would), and so lost the spontaneity that was the expertness.

'*A sort of love for everything connected with the scene of their daily life.*'

The passing of the old thatched cottage does not break the thread. The Andrews cottage is a modern one; it is built of white brick and has a front door which does not open into the parlour but into a little

hall. There is a small scullery too, with a copper in it. This is used as a room so that the front room can have the dignity of being used on 'occasions'; and usually the end of the working day is marked by the family moving from the scullery to the parlour for six o'clock tea. Mrs. Andrews says it is the best house they have ever had. But though the house is new, everything in it speaks of what only the village labourer and the nobility now have—a pedigree. The great middle classes are continually moving and intermingling and burying their traces, but about the labourer, as about the old squire, there is still something ancestral. In the great house is a gallery of ancestors' portraits; in the parlour of the Andrews' cottage the walls are hung with photographs of a multitude of relations, with the old grandfather and grandmother centremost.

In the scullery in front of the copper fire lies a furry heap that looks like a rug that has been shaken and not yet laid again. The young daughter goes to it and lifts up what takes shape as a cat as she draws it apart; then another and another, and of each cat she tells you the history and pedigree, as though the parents were as personal to you as they are to her. She evokes, as she drapes the cats, drowsy with firelight, about her, a picture of sunny days and the bare patch outside the back door, with cloths drying on the currant bushes and old cats sitting in the porch and children playing with the young ones. You see it as a little world in itself, which makes this account of the cats so important

to her. The pedigree fades for her into the mists of the past with 'And the mother of that one was the old cat we brought with us when we moved with the master from West Green—she was only a tiny mite of a kitten then.'

Mrs. Andrews' husband is engine man and tractor-driver on the big farm against whose yards his cottage stands. There have been three villages in their lives, the village he came from, the village she came from, and the village in which they now live. In those first two villages, almost within sight from here, their past generations lie. The beginning of Jude Andrews' family tree was when some roaming ancestor settled down and took to living in a house. He is a man of tenacious interests. He has picked up, heaven knows how, a knowledge of machinery, born of his interest in what was new about him. He has hardly taken a horse by the bridle for years.

All day, if he is not on the tractor, he will have several things going at once in the yards—the grinding mill, the pumping-engine, and the electric light plant. And after work, in the evening, he sits in the parlour mending a watch or his wireless set. There are several old clocks on the wall. Such things stand in the same relation to the cottage family as the earlier portraits in the gallery of the great house to the squire. One of the clocks is a memento of Mrs. Andrews' grandmother—an American eight-day clock with a bright-coloured picture on the glass. Her grandmother soon after she

was married saw the clock in a shop in the market town and set her heart on it. But of course labourers' wages in those days put it far beyond her reach. Nevertheless she determined to have it, so she went and worked in the fields with her husband; her job was to stand behind him as he was land-draining in the winter, and pour water on his spade to keep the clay from sticking.

The pay was very small, 'and sometimes she stood there all day with the icicles hanging down all round the bottom of her skirt'. But at last she earned enough to buy the clock.

It went for many years, but it broke down at last. Then when she was an old lady she used to amuse her grandchildren by twanging the wires inside the clock. When she died the clock passed to Mrs. Andrews, and when Mrs. Andrews married her mechanically-minded husband, of course he could not rest till he had made the old clock go again. 'And a rare job he had with it. He's never been beat by a watch or a clock, but dashed if I didn't think this one had beat him. However, he got it to go in the end; I well remember the day that it started a-ticking again. It was that same evening as that Zeppelin was brought down at Cuffley. My husband had got that to go and we'd gone to bed when someone shouted "Look over there—I reckon that's a Zepp brought down." And we went out and looked and you could see it plain as anything, all alight, though it must have been thirty mile away. And the old clock

hung there a-ticking again; that's been going ever since.'

'*The outlook of the individual and the village would be the same.*'

So much so that there are 'bad' villages, 'good' villages, 'poaching' villages, etc. Of one the reputation is 'They're a rare boozin' lot'. If the villages ever change their characters they change very, very slowly. It has been said to me of a man, 'Don't have him to work for you, he comes from B——; that always was a bad village.' And that village really is, in some occult way, bad, and one can't help feeling it is something to do with the soil, the cold heavy clay perhaps, the cutting down or the mutilation of trees in the interests of arable farming—grotesquely pollarded or allowed to grow up with a single stem but no branches save a tuft on top like the last feathers of a bird—though in other parts arable farming seems to go on (and more prosperously) without these expedients. The place is full of witches, falling cottages and a general sort of desperation. I said, 'Well, of course it is due to the times'; but people reply, 'No, B—— always was a bad village.'

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